As the trail of blood and honor gets deeper and longer, corruption and double crossings abound. Two considerably evil and ambitious forces, previously teamed to finally kill the vengeful samurai Itto Ogami, clash in the torrential rains that continue to pound Edo. Determined to be the first to reach Itto and his son Diagoro, the shogun's own poisoner waits in a temple where the samurai and his toddler boy left their cart, reflecting on the path that has led him to this point, and brewing his most deadly poison. Meanwhile, the Lone Wolf and Cub enlist the aid of a tailor to prepare robes of white silk for what could be their last stand! There's something in the air, and it smells like death!

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DARK HORSE COMICS

LONE WOLF AND CUB

KAZUO KOIKE & GOSEKI KOJIMA

LONE WOLF AND CUB

VOLUME 21

FRAGRANCE OF DEATH

By KAZUO KOIKE & GOSEKI KOJIMA

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FRAGRANCE OF DEATH

子連れ狼

By KAZUO KOIKE
& GOSEKI KOJIMA

VOLUME

21

A NOTE TO READERS

Lone Wolf and Cub is famous for its carefully researched re-creation of Edo-Period Japan. To preserve the flavor of the work, we have chosen to retain many Edo-Period terms that have no direct equivalents in English. Japanese is written in a mix of Chinese ideograms and a syllabic writing system, resulting in numerous synonyms. In the glossary, you may encounter words with multiple meanings. These are words written with Chinese ideograms that are pronounced the same but carry different meanings. A Japanese reader seeing the different ideograms would know instantly which meaning it is, but these synonyms can cause confusion when Japanese is spelled out in our alphabet. *O-yurushi o* (please forgive us)!

LONE WOLF AND CUB

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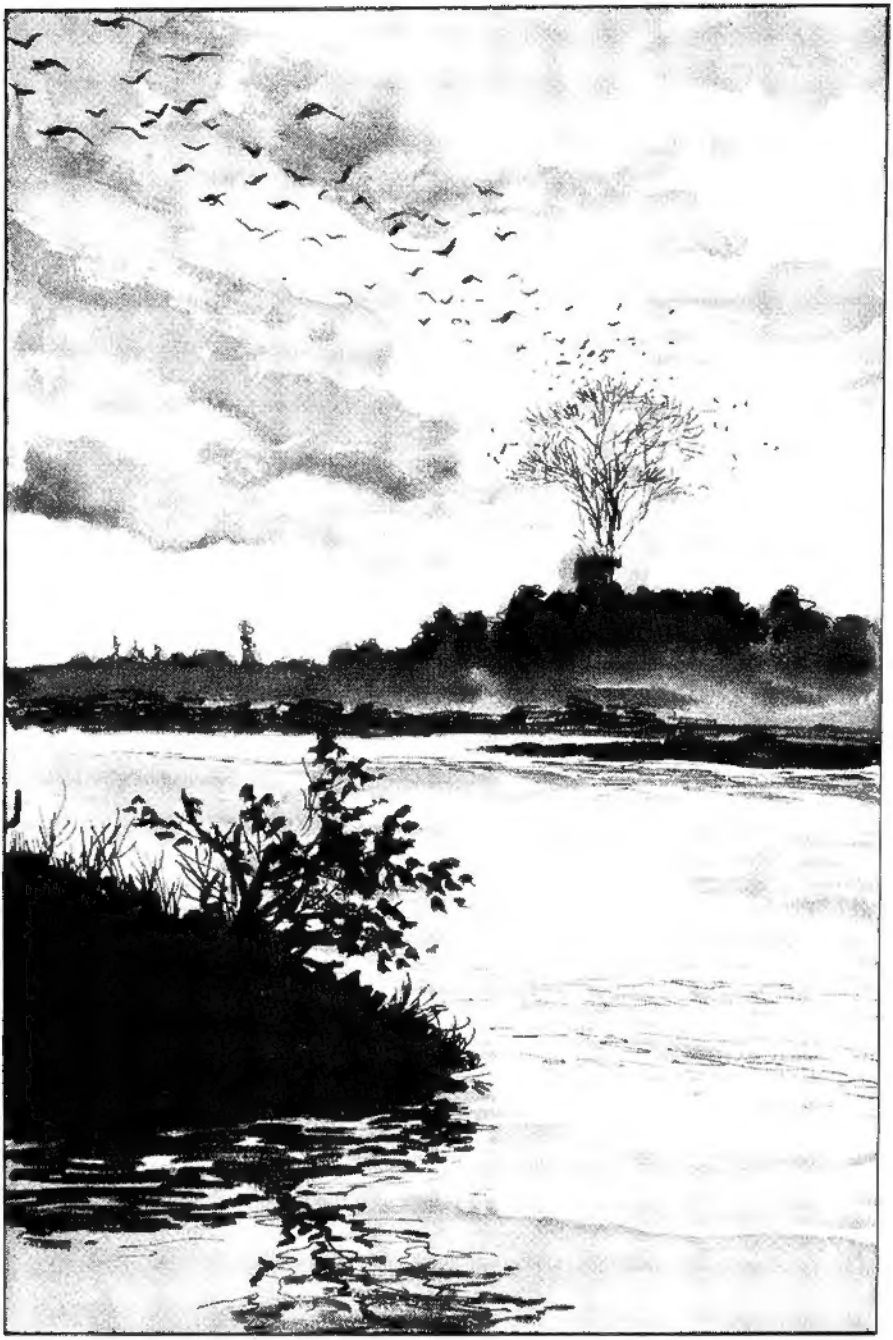
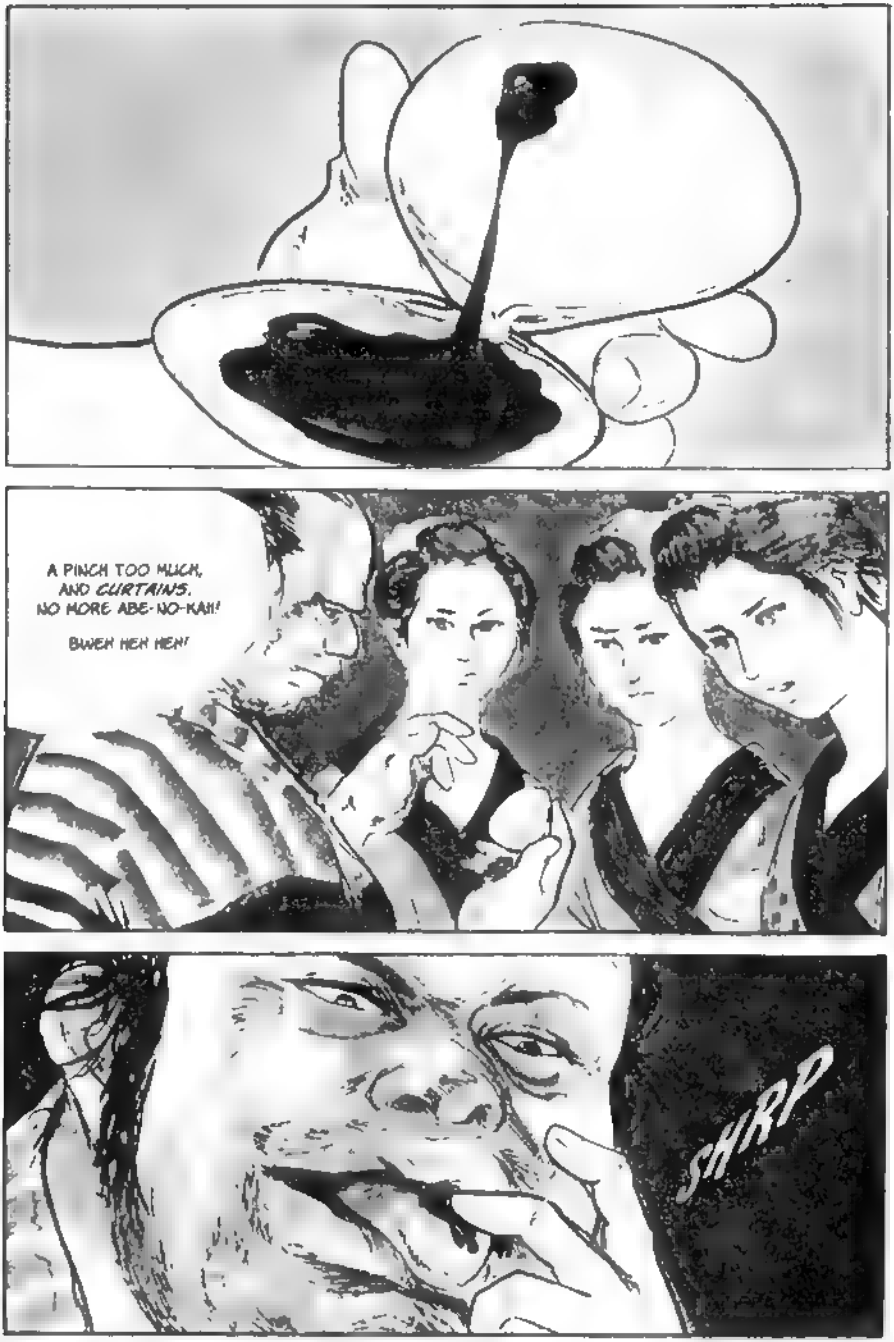
the hundred and third

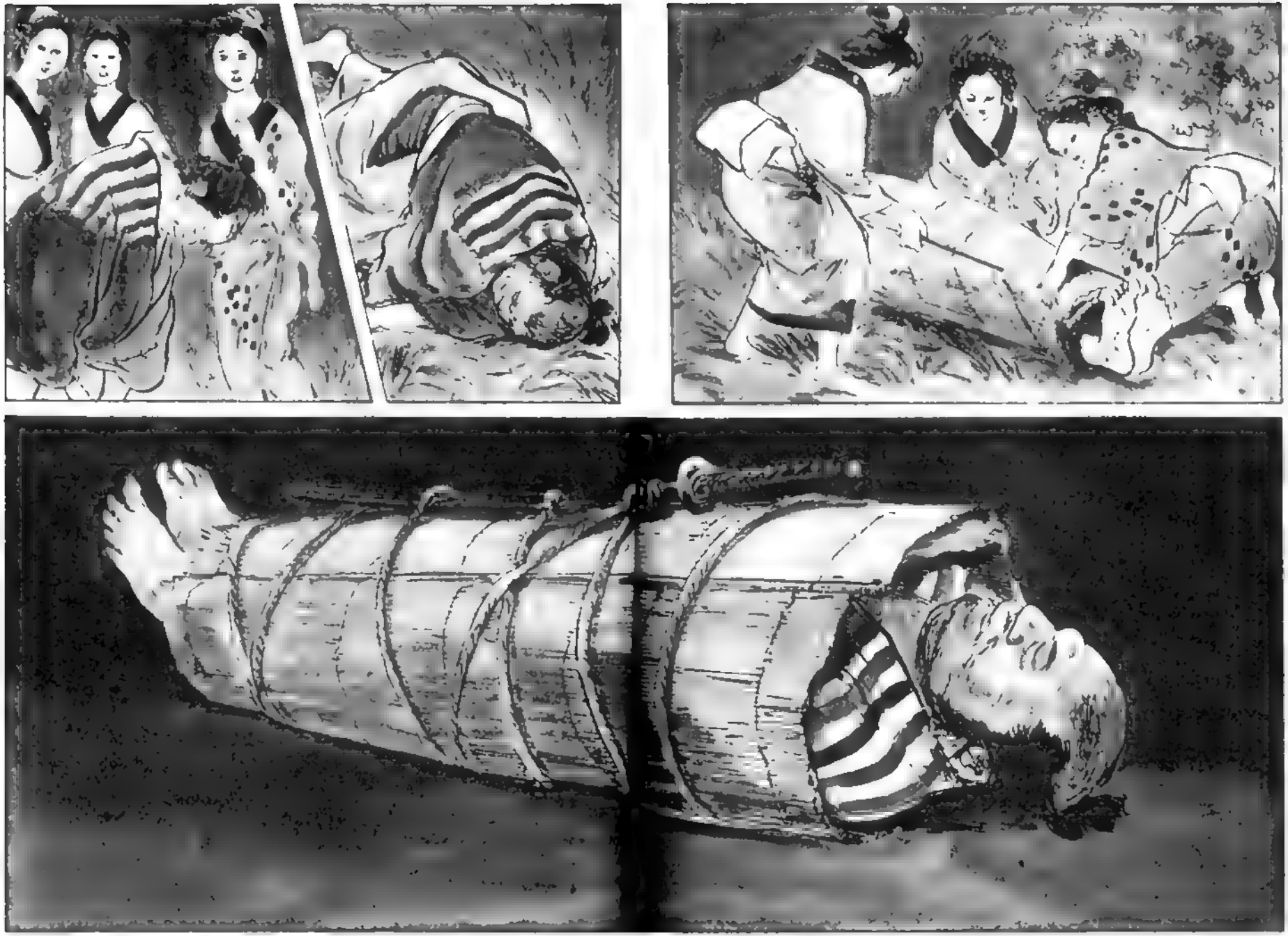
Poison Currents



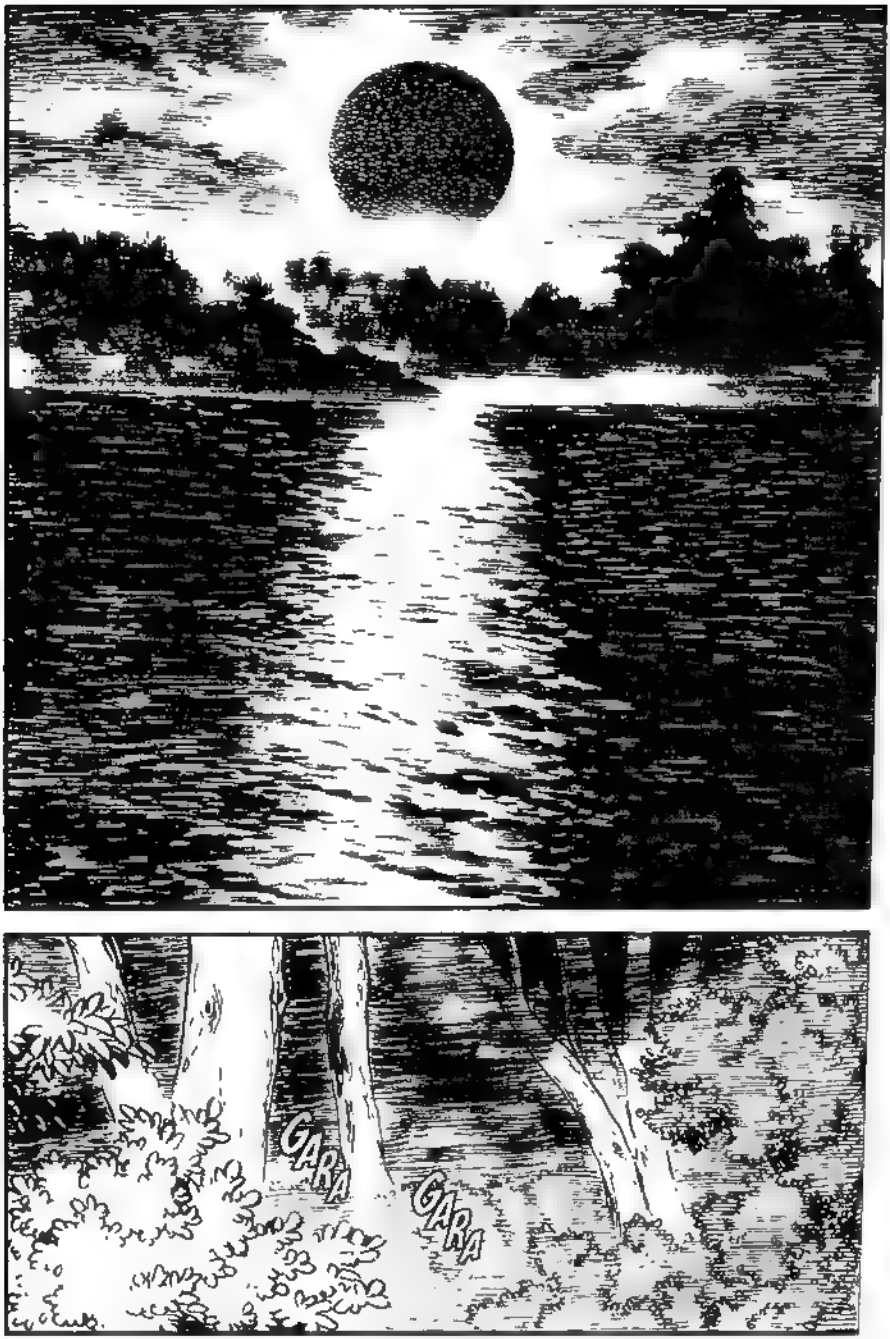
THE SUN'S ALMOST DOWN. THEY'LL MOVE OUT SOON.
SHALL WE PREPARE?
GOT IT, O-TOSHI? EXACTLY AS I SAID.
Y-YES, SIR. BUT GOZEN-SAMA... ARE YOU GOOD IN WATER..?
ME? HEH! I CAN'T EVEN SWIM.
BUT THEN... HOW...?
THAT'S WHAT THIS IS FOR. YOU DON'T SWALLOW WHEN YOU'RE OUT COLD. I CAN LAST HALF AN HOUR.

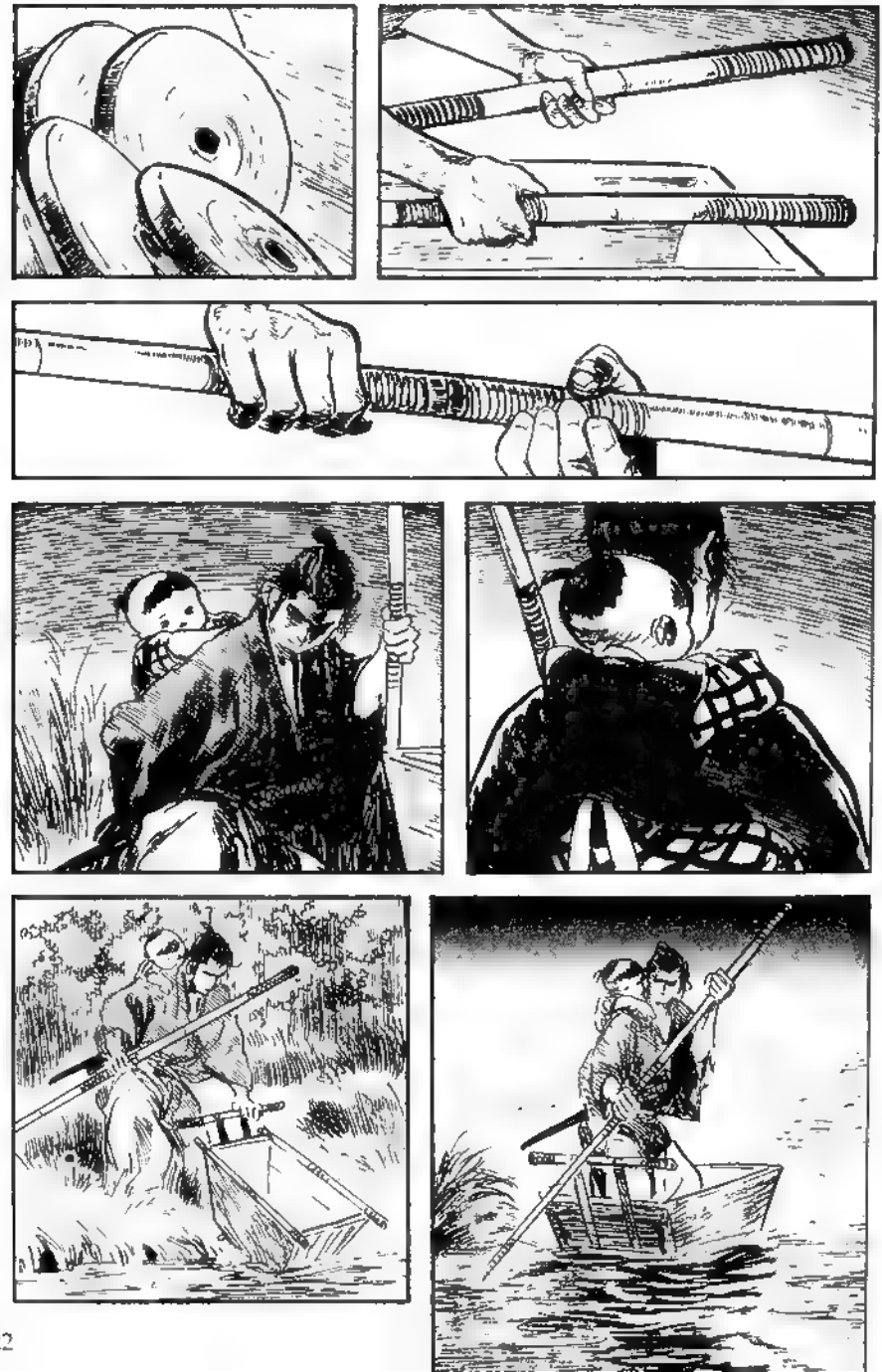

A PINCH TOO MUCH, AND CURTAINS. NO MORE ABE-NO-KAI!
BWEH HEH HEH!
SHRP

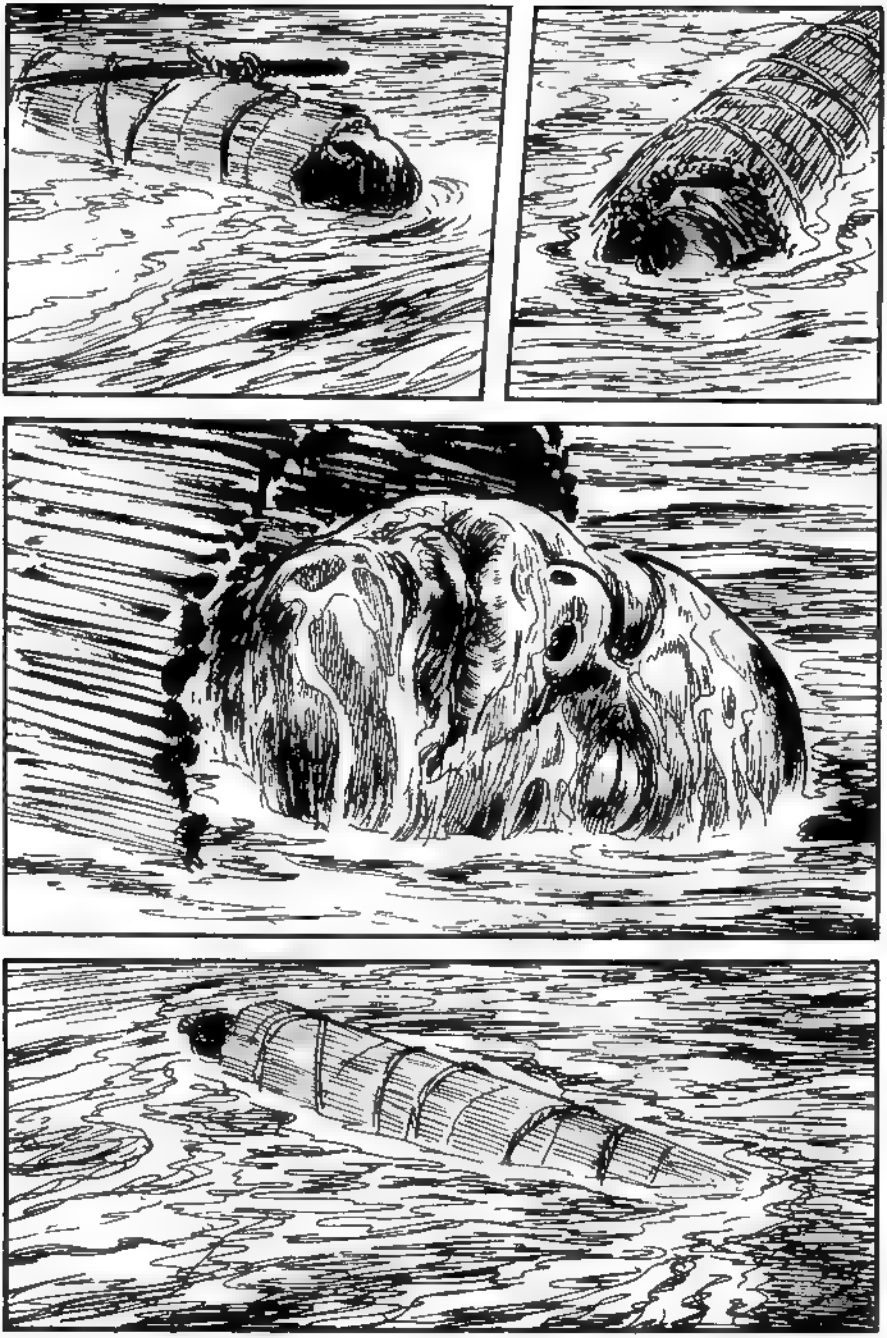
SHRP
HAHHH



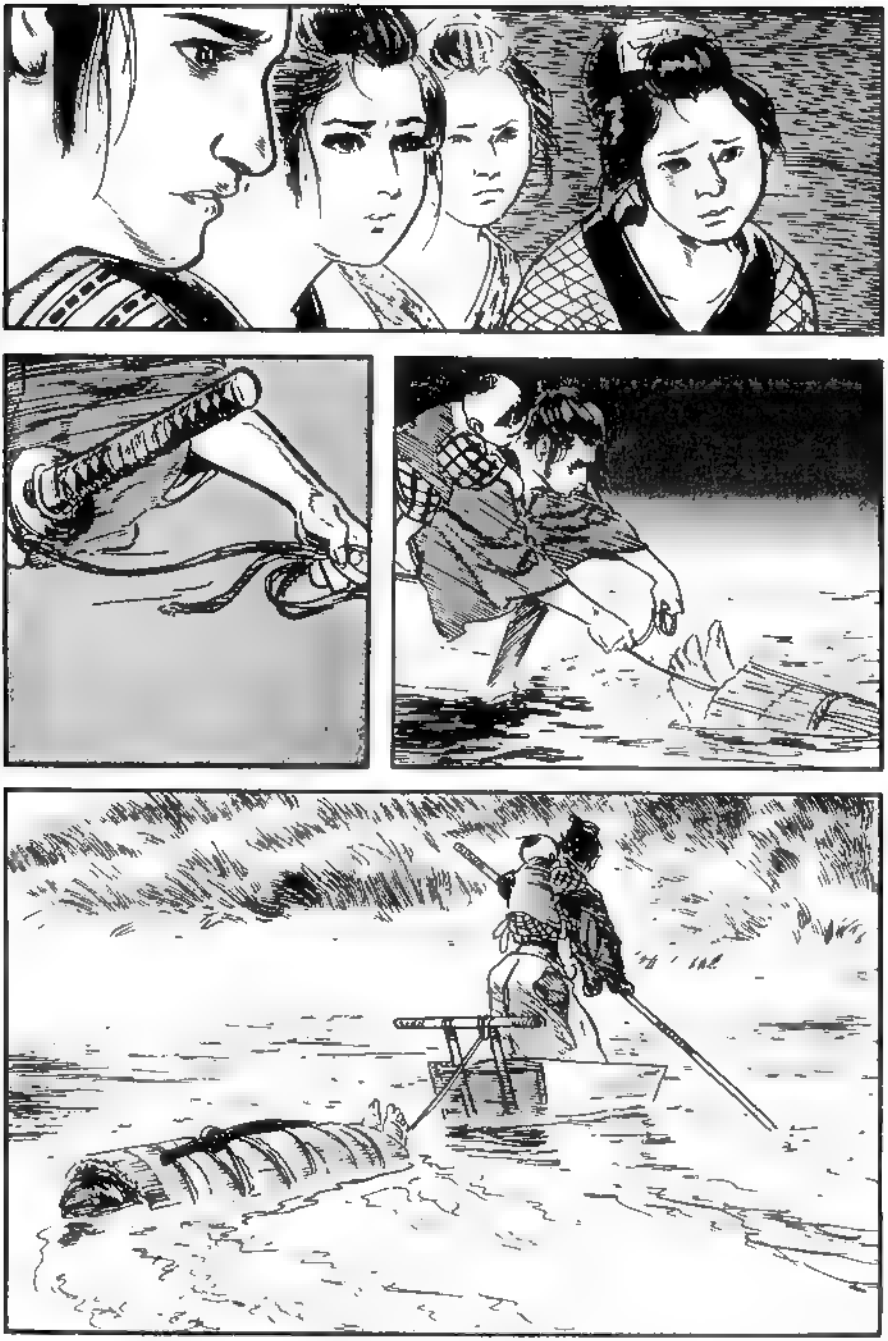
THEY
THEY'RE
MAKE
SURE
THEY'RE

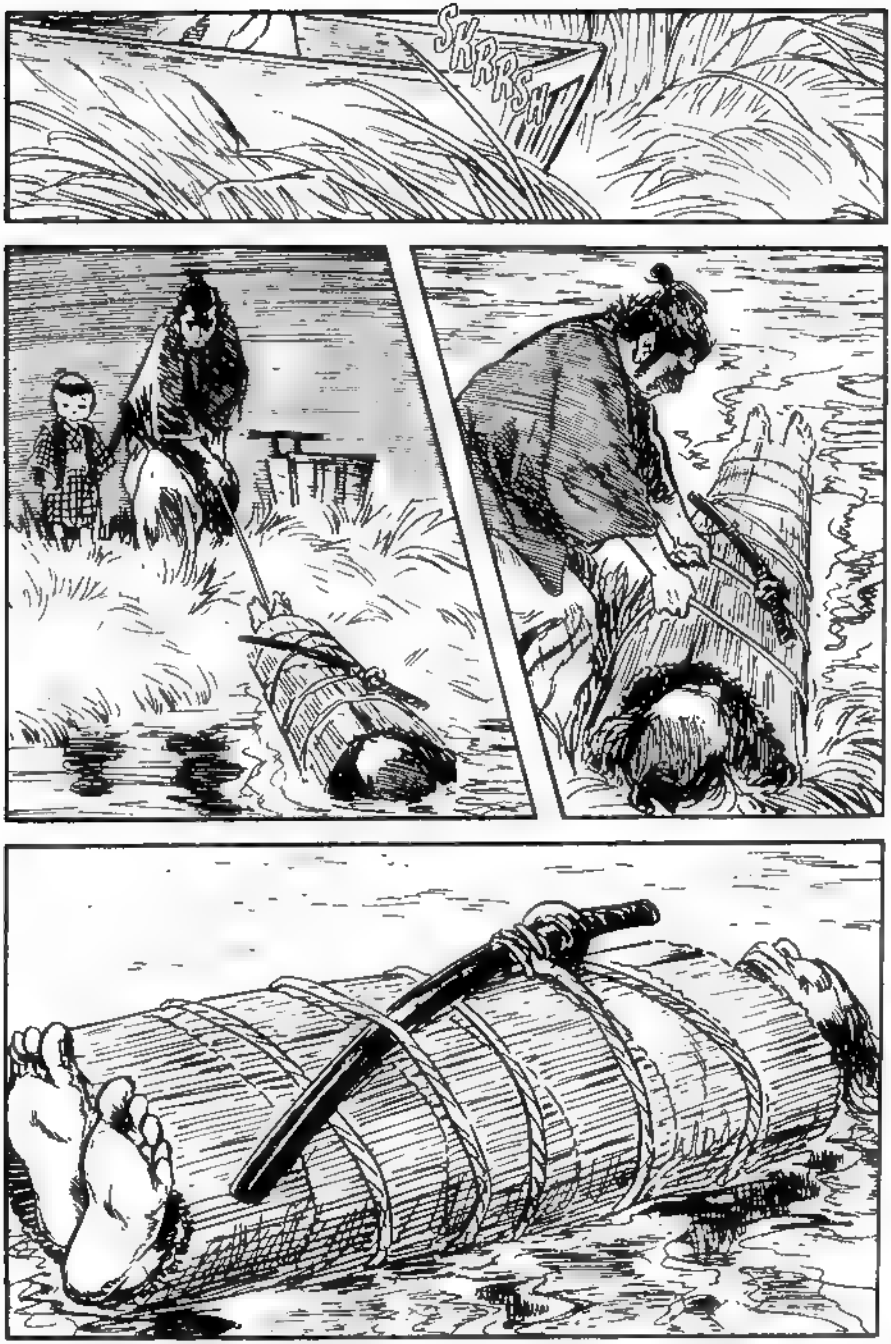

GARA
GARA

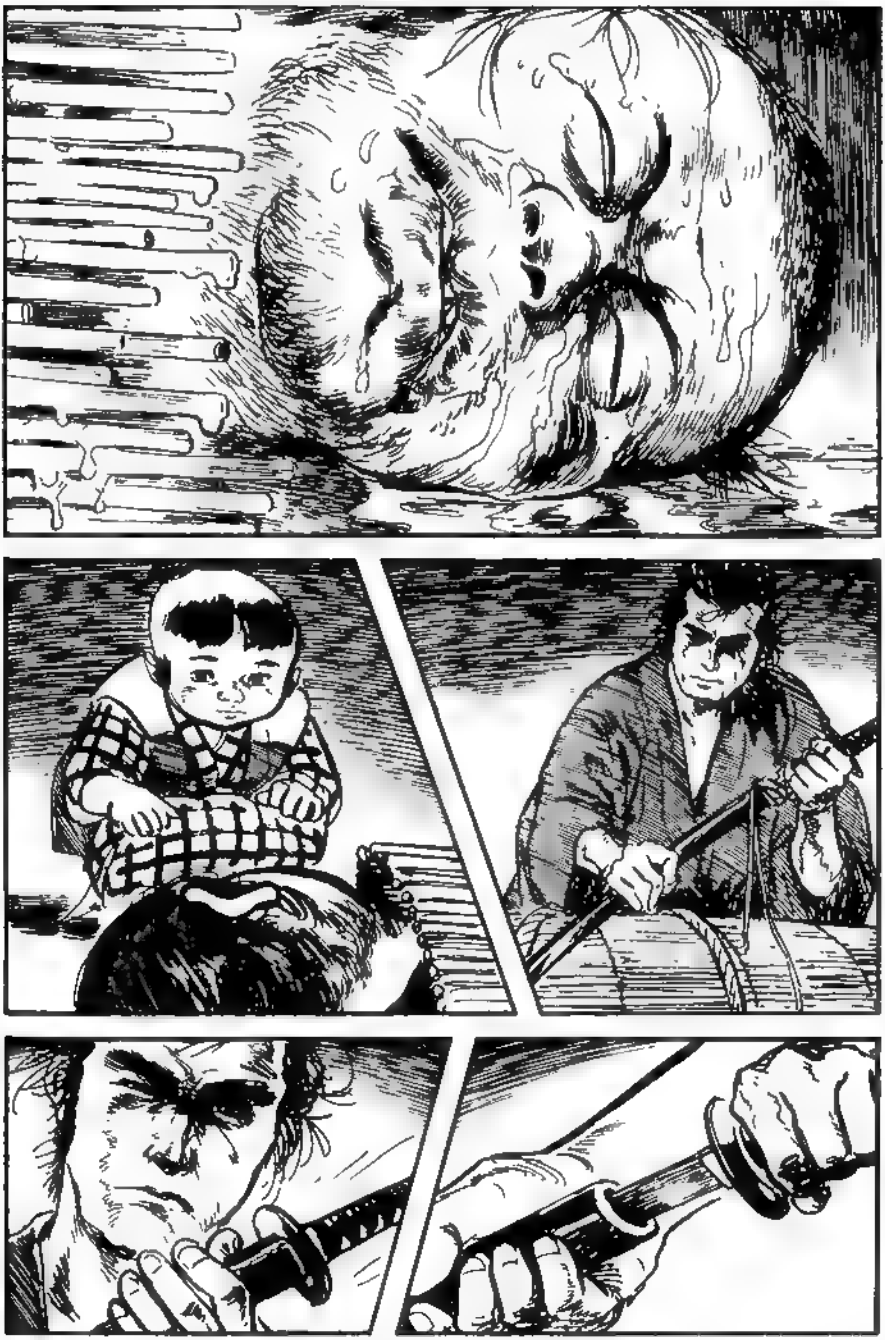




PAPA!




SKRRSH



NNGN. .
NNG..
NO!!

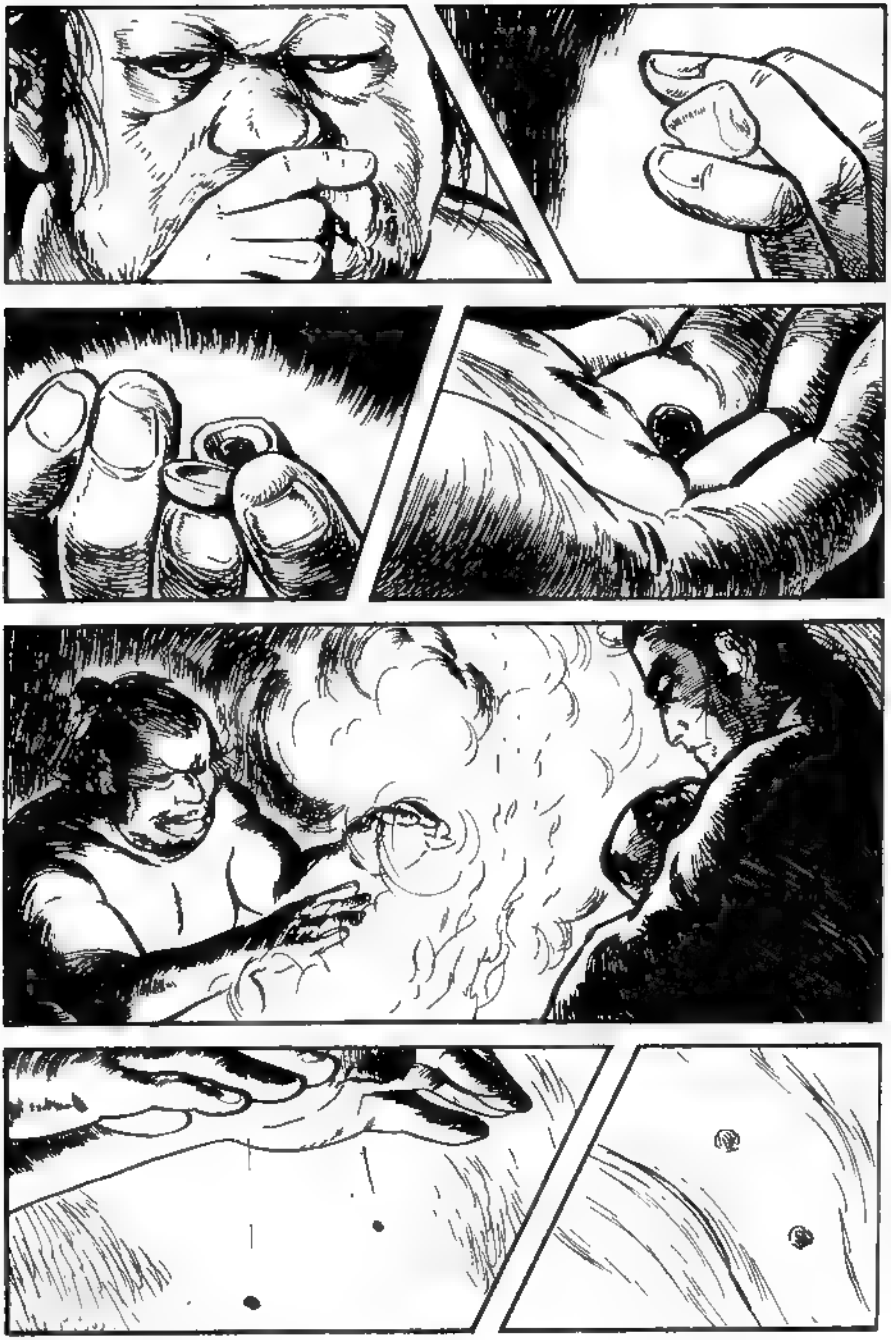
SO... I SEE...
THE SUMAKI TREATMENT
AND YOU SAVED ME, GOOD SIR?
I... I..
I'M SO GRATEFUL!

YAMABE, BISHŪ RŌNIN.
A CHANCE MEETING REQUIRES NO NAMES.

YOU'RE TOO KIND. I'M SO ASHAMED.

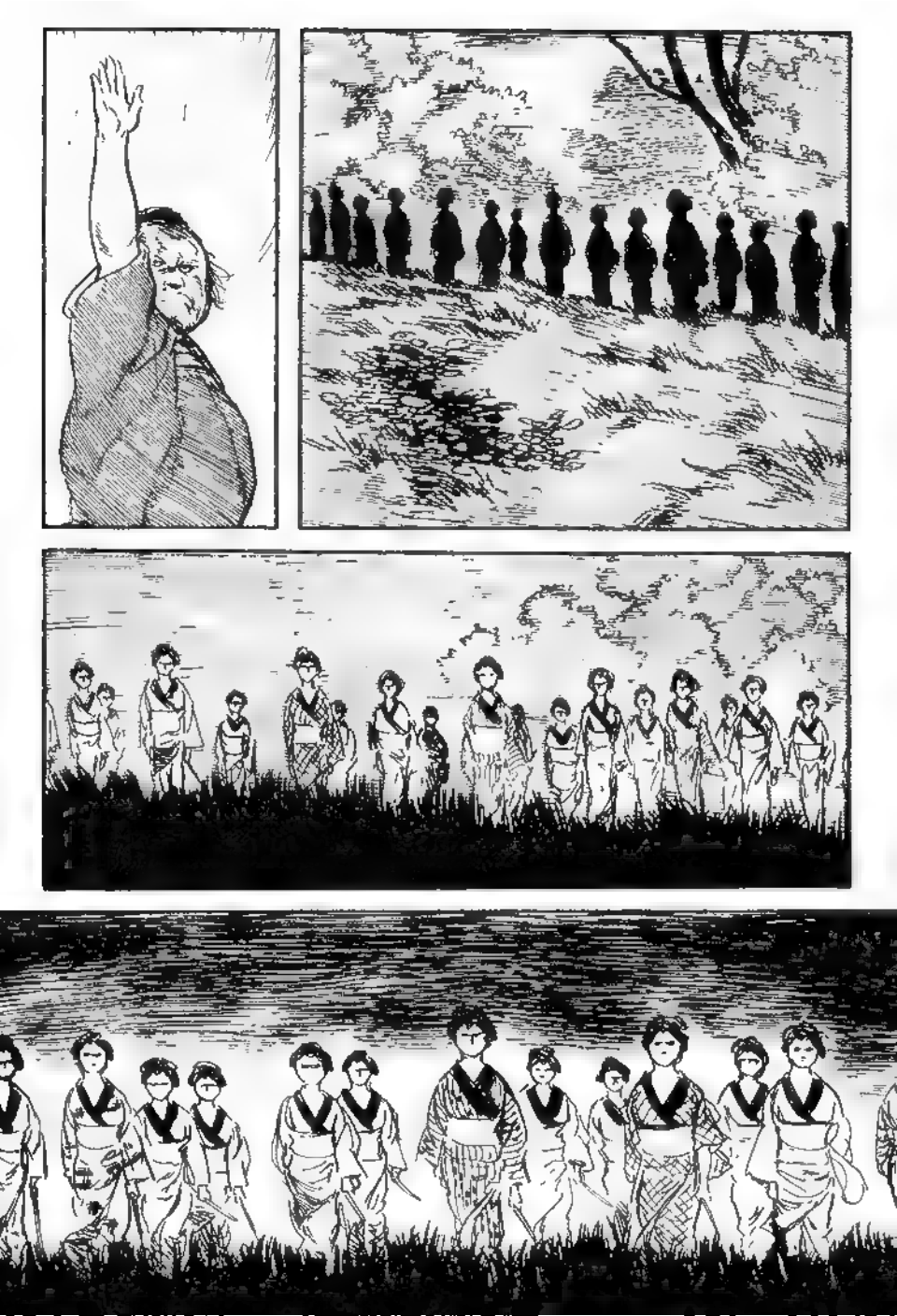
JUST ONE QUESTION.
BEATEN AND CAST INTO THE RIVER, YET YOU SWALLOW NO WATER. HOW?!
THEY PUNCHED ME IN THE GUT ON THE BANK.
AFTER THAT IT'S ALL BLANK. I GUESS I BLACKED OUT. THAT LAST LITTLE CRUELTY MUST HAVE SAVED MY LIFE.

ME AND TWO FRIENDS HIT A YAKUZA GAMBLING JOINT. WE WERE PENNILESS. I WAS LOOKOUT, SINCE I'M SO USELESS.
BUT IT WAS A MASSACRE. THEY BUTCHERED MY PALS, AND CAUGHT ME WHEN I RAN...
GO ON. LAUGH AT ME.



HEH HEH HEH.
MY LOVELY
LITTLE
GANSUITAN.

HAUUUN..
HN. .



BWEH HEH HEH!
JUST A MAN. A FRAIL LITTLE MAN.
GRIND HERBS AND HEMP INTO PASTE BALL IT UP, AND THERE YOU HAVE IT— GANSUITAN
BREATHE THAT SMOKE, AND YOU'RE DEAD TO THE WORLD

NO MATTER WHAT COMES, HEH HEH HEH. EVEN DEATH ITSELF!

OH, POOR LONE WOLF AND CUB!
I HATE THE SIGHT OF BLOOD. HATE IT!
DRIPPING, CRIMSON BLOOD!
RIGHT! DO THEM!

HURRY UP!
TO HELL WITH THE KID! DON'T YOU WANT AFUYO?

FSSSST
FWK
KYAHHH!
HRK-K!

WHA ?
WHAT ON EARTH...?
MY GANSUITAN NEVER FAILS!
WHICH. MEANS...?
ASLEEP DEEP ASLEEP!

DO IT!
KILL THE BASTARD!
SSSS
SWOOSH
SKRRK

NGYAHH!
KAAIEE!
I I'M AFRAID..!
I'VE HEARD ABOUT THIS.
THEY SAY A SWORD MASTER HAS TWO KI.

EVEN ASLEEP, EVEN UNCONSCIOUS, NEVER AT REST
SHIN-GI, CATCHING THE BLOOD LUST HADA-GI, CATCHING THE BREEZE OF AN ATTACK ON THE SKIN. THEY MOVE THE SWORD, BY THEMSELVES.
MU ITSELF MIND AND BODY AS ONE.
I DON'T BELIEVE THAT CRAP I WON'T BELIEVE IT BUT, BUT
THROW THEM!

FWT
FWTT
KANG
USSS
HNNG

COME BACK HERE!

D-DAMN!
SHNNG
GOZEN-SAMA. WHAT NOW?
WE'LL HAVE TO BURN THEM! SPREAD OIL.

I'LL GET SOME!
HURRY! BEFORE IT WEARS OFF!

HRRRK
URK
KNG.
HE'S
NOT HUMAN
NOT ANIMAL
A MONSTER!

GOZEN-SAMA! WE GOT IT!
HURRY! DO IT NOW!
FIRE'S THE THING FOR MONSTERS! FRY THEM!
SPRRSH
BLSSSH

WHOOSH
FOOOSH

EEEK!
HK
AHH!

AGH!
NGH...?!
AAH...
ARE YOU OKAY?!
I, I THOUGHT WE WERE FINISHED! THOSE WOMEN CAME OUT OF NOWHERE! KNIVES! OIL...!

YOU WERE ASLEEP, SIR... BUT SOMEHOW I..
IT'S TRUE! IF I HADN'T BEEN HERE, YOU AND YOUR BOY...
LOOK. JUST LOOK! THIS SLAUGHTER!

RRK.. ?!
AAH!
AIEEE!

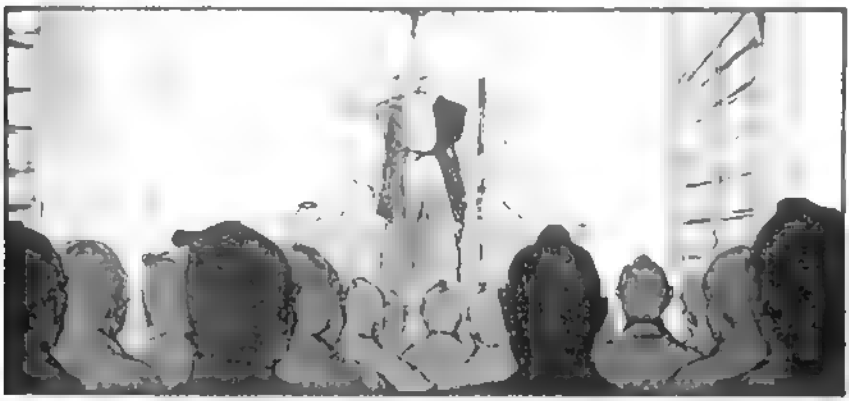
YAHH!
GYAAA!
YAIEEEE!

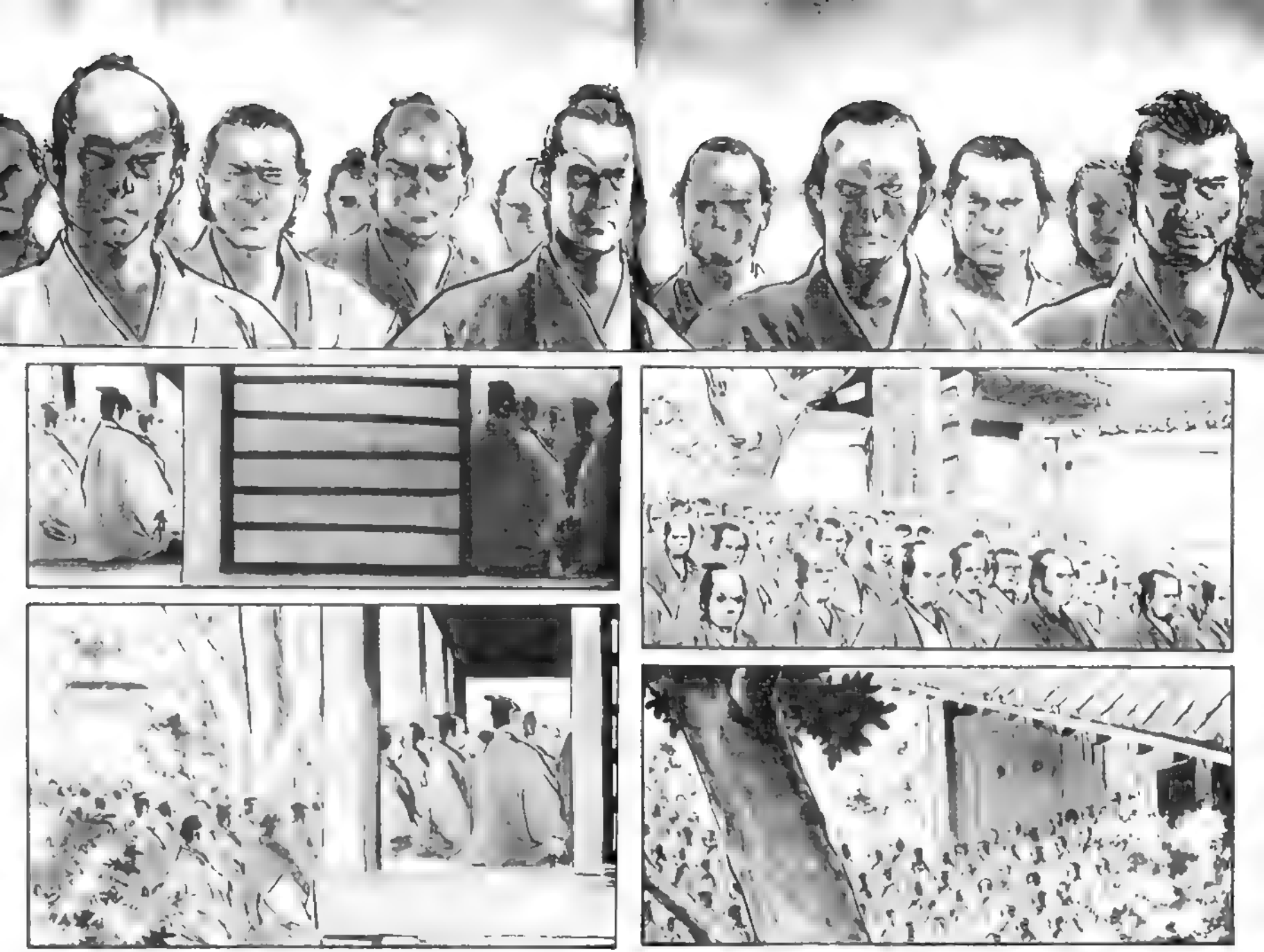
ING!
AAHGH!
EEYAHHH!

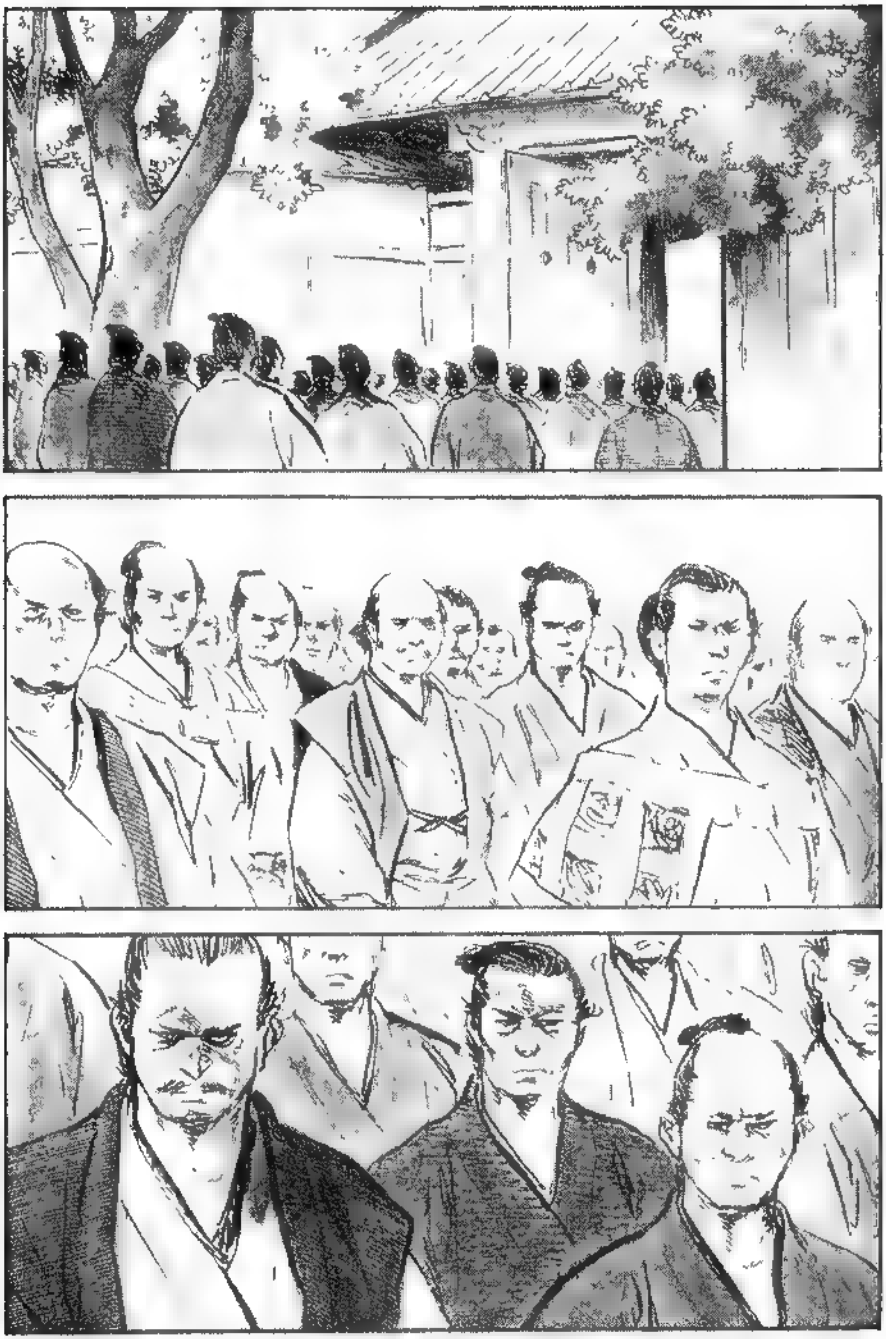
#MANGAPROJECT

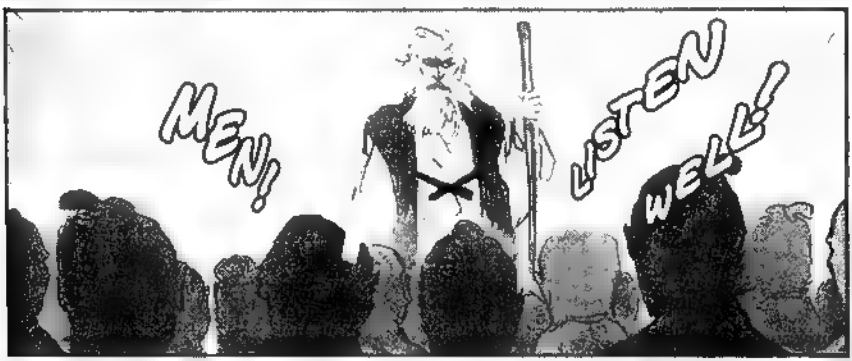
the hundred and fourth

Flood of Fire







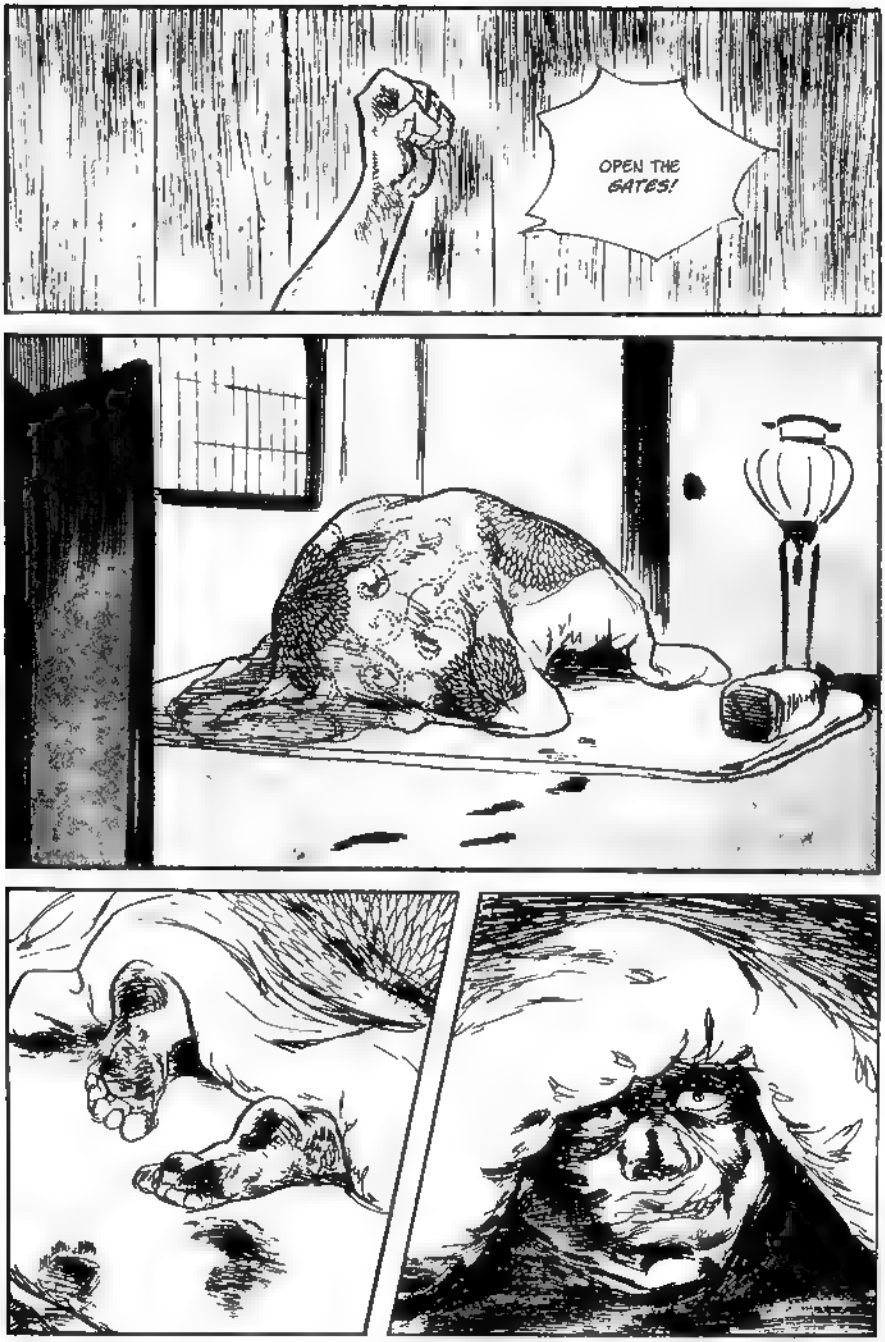

MEN!
LISTEN
WELL!

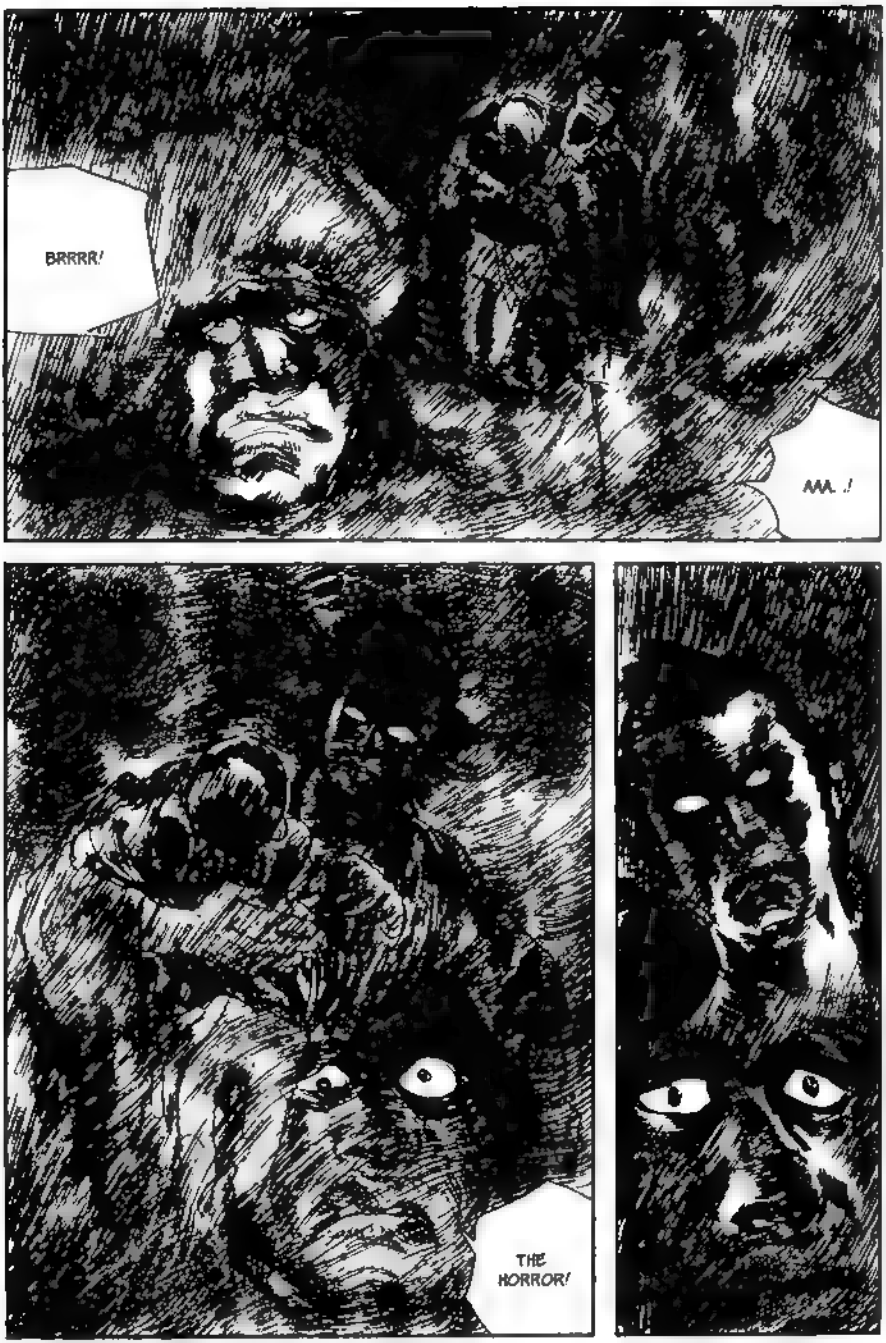
TEN DAYS HAVE PASSED SINCE ŌGAMI ITTŌ AND HIS SON ENTERED EDO!
WE'VE TRIED TRICKS AND PLOTS, AND FAILED! WE STAND UPON THE PRECIPICE!

NO MORE STRATEGEMS! WE TAKE HIM HEAD ON!
KRAKK

WE RAISE ALL OUR CLAN.
..AND AT LAST–
KILL HIM!!
WE SHALL BE A FLOOD OF DEATH, ENGULFING HIM! AND I SHALL STRIKE OFF HIS HEAD!
KSHAAKK

THE FINAL BATTLE! BY WHICH WE RISE, OR FALL!
OPEN THE GATES! EMISSARIES TO THE KUCHIYAKU ABE-SAMA, FROM RETSUDÔ-SAMA, HEAD OF THE YAGYÛ
OPEN THE GATES!


OPEN THE GATES!

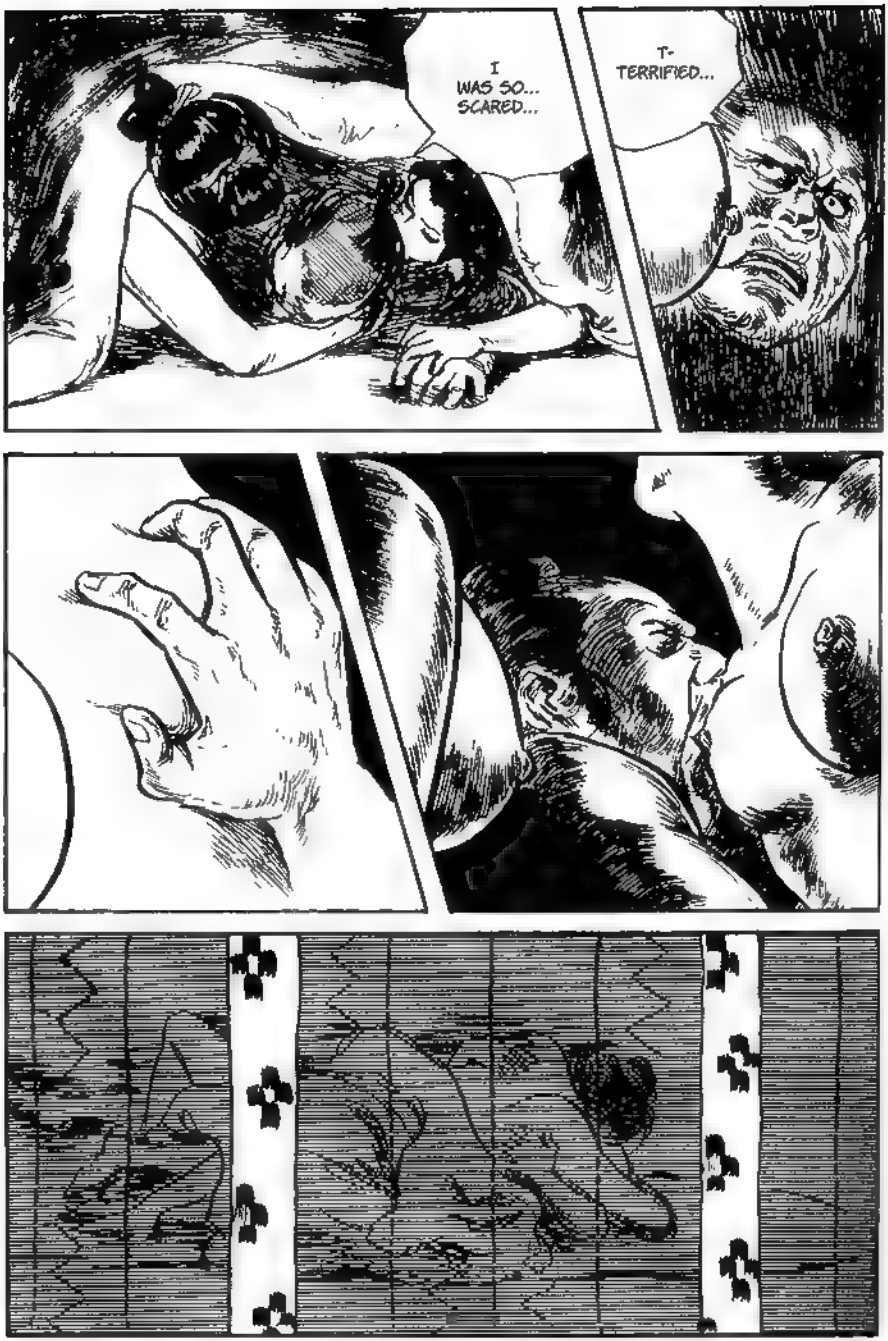

BRRRR!
AAA..!
THE HORROR!

OH, THE HORROR...
OPEN THE GATES!
A MESSAGE FROM RETSUDŌ-SAMA!
HE'S NOT HUMAN HE'S A A MONSTER...!
AAHHN!
MY LORD
THERE'S AN URGENT MESSAGE FROM YAGYU RETSUDŌ-SAMA.

T-TELL THEM I'M *SICK!* ASK THEIR BUSINESS, AND THEN GET *RID* OF THEM.

O-MENO AND O-HANA.. WHAT'S *KEEPING* THEM?!
MY LORD, THEY'RE WAITING...

MY LORD!
HURRY UP! DO IT NOW!


I WAS SO... SCARED...
T- TERRIFIED...

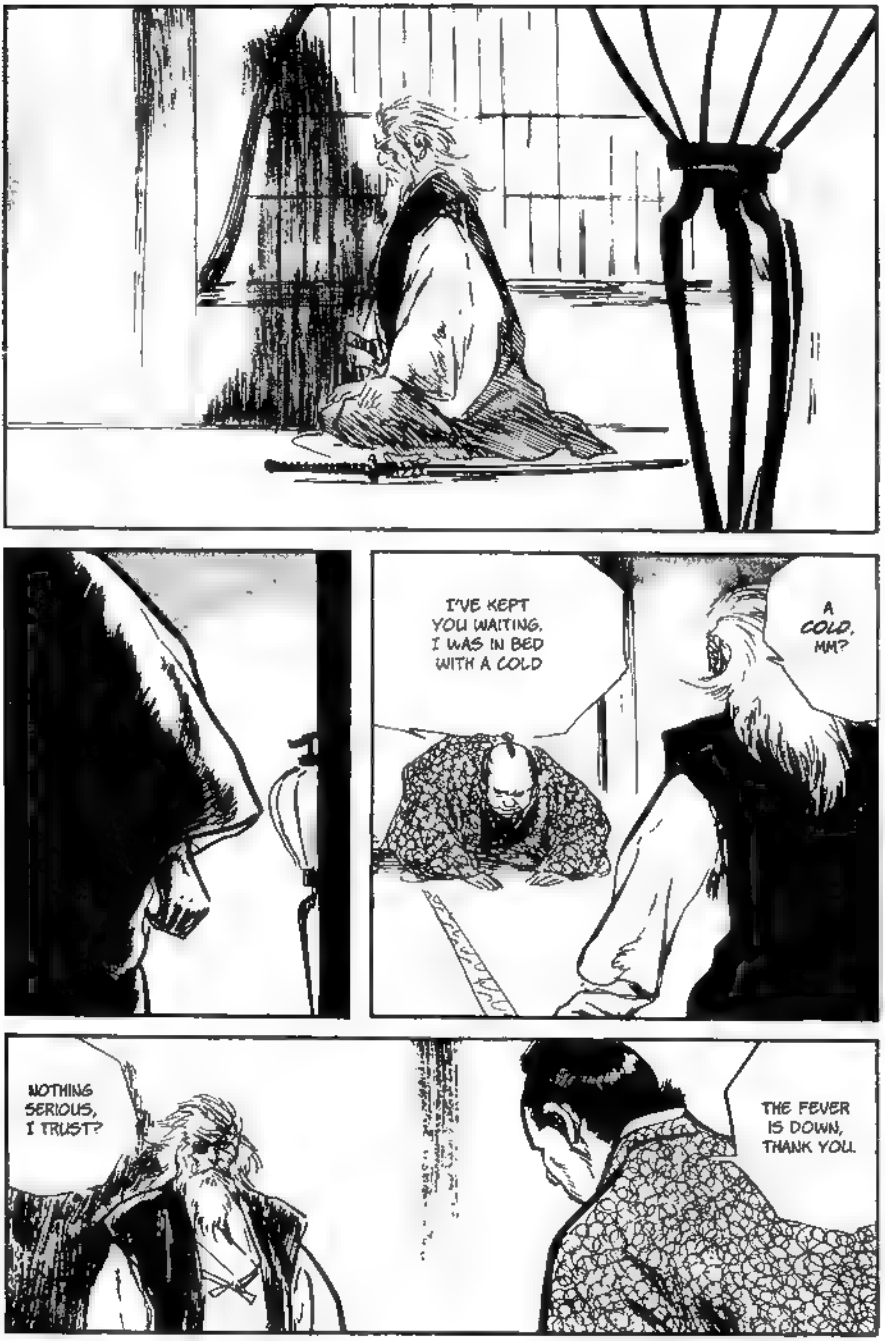
AHNN!
GO-GOZEN-SAMA!
OHH . AHH .
AHH! FINALLY... FEELING HUMAN AGAIN!
AHNN
AHH
OHH

AHHNN
OHH
AAHH

THP THP THP
GOZEN-SAMA!
WHAT NOW, O-TAMA?! YOU'RE DISTRACTING ME!
YA-YAGYŪ RETSUDŌ-SAMA... HE'S...
WHAT...?!
HE'S COME HIMSELF?!
Y-YES, SIR!
WHEN I TOLD THE EMISSARIES YOU WERE ILL, THEY LEFT . AND NOW HE'S AT THE GATES HIMSELF!

AND...?!
HE SAYS IT'S FOR *YOUR* EARS *ONLY*, SIR. AND THAT IF TANOSHI-*DONO* IS ILL, THEN HE'D LIKE TO PAY HIS CONDOLENCES. HE'S WAITING RIGHT OUTSIDE, SIR!
SHOW HIM TO THE GUEST ROOM! SAY I'LL BE RIGHT THERE!
YES, SIR...!
MY *SAKAYAKI*... MY BEARD, TOO!
DON'T JUST *STAND* THERE! *CLOTHES!*

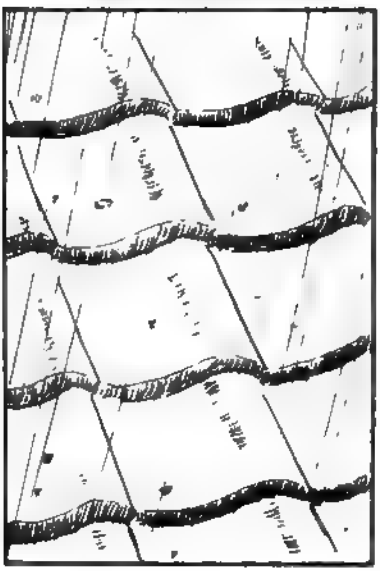
HURRY!
FASTER!


I'VE KEPT YOU WAITING. I WAS IN BED WITH A COLD
A COLD. MM?
NOTHING SERIOUS, I TRUST?
THE FEVER IS DOWN, THANK YOU.

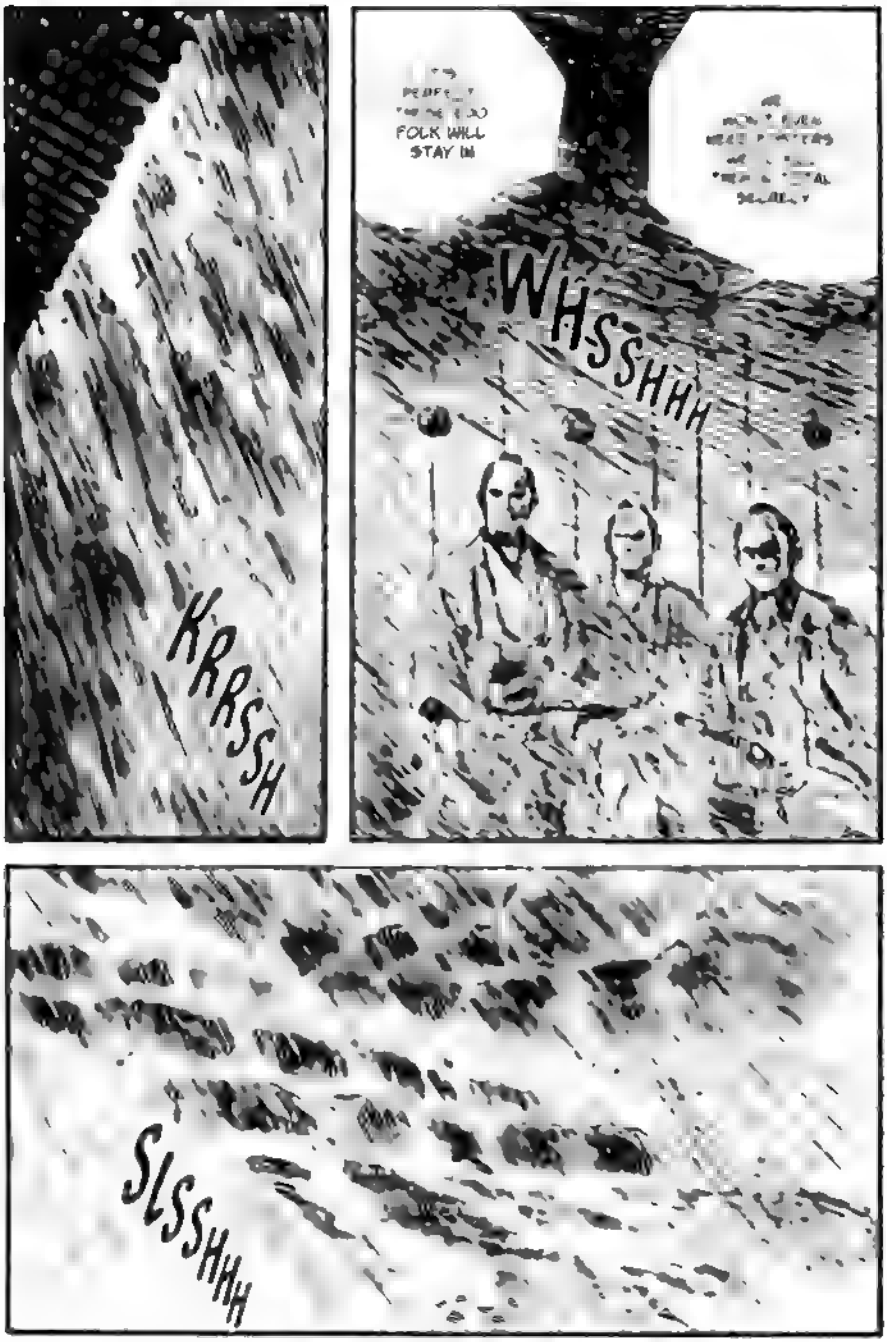
WHAT BUSINESS BRINGS MY LORD HERE. ?
THE YAGYŪ WILL KILL LONE WOLF YOUR SERVICES ARE NO LONGER NEEDED.
BUT WHY?!
IF THERE'S FIGHTING IN EDO, THERE'LL BE A SCANDAL! INNOCENT PEOPLE COULD DIE!
WASN'T THAT WHY WE DECIDED THAT I WOULD KILL HIM FOR YOU?
WHY THIS SUDDEN CHANGE. ?
AND LONE WOLF?

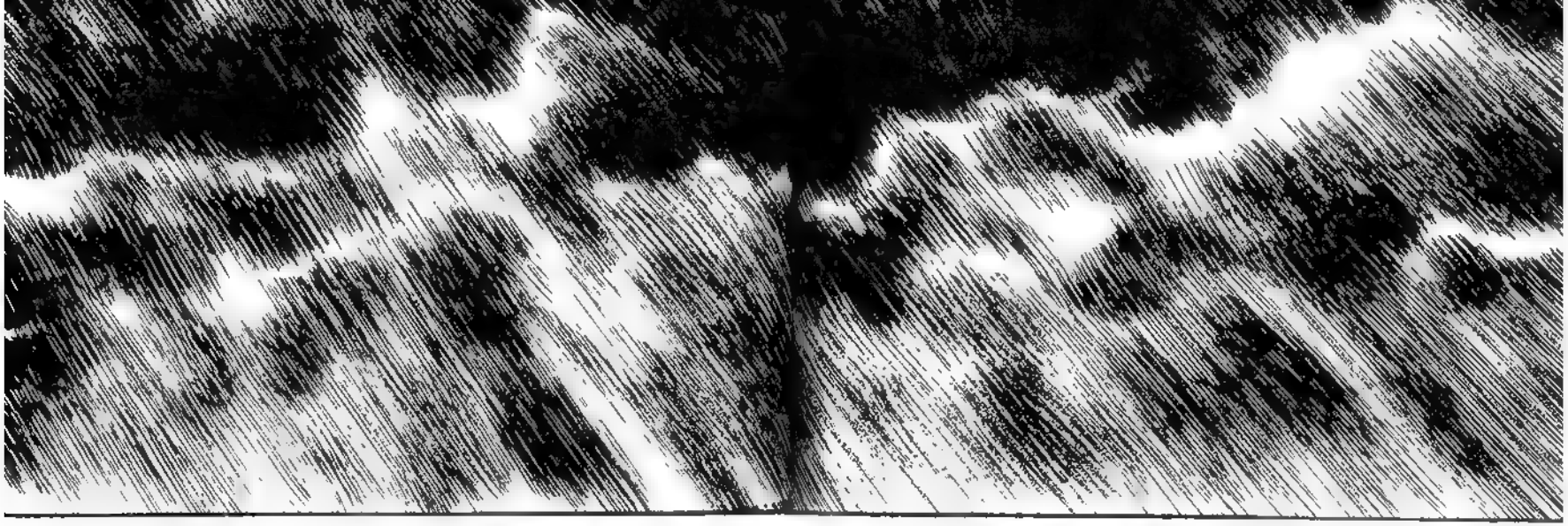
I'VE FOUND HIM, OF COURSE. EVERYTHING'S SET
I WAS GOING TO STRIKE THE MINUTE I WAS WELL.
REGARDLESS, YOU WILL NOW STEP ASIDE.
OUR PREPARATIONS ARE COMPLETE. I'VE NOTIFIED THE O-METSUKE AND MACHI-BUGYO.
WANTED POSTERS ARE UP ACROSS EDO ALL ROADS ALONG THE RIVERS ARE CLOSED.
NO ONE'S ALLOWED ACROSS THE KUROBIKI LINE.

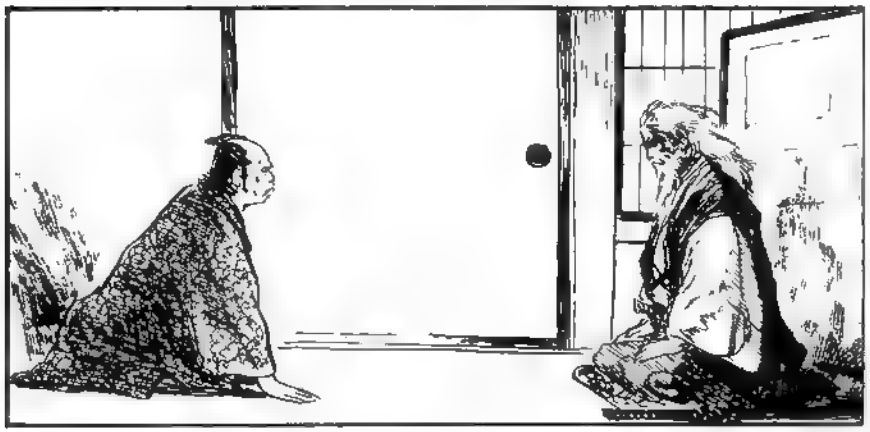
A CURFEW BEGINS AT DARK.
FIRST WE'LL DRIVE LONE WOLF AND CUB ACROSS THE KUROBIKI, AND THEN—
—KILL HIM!



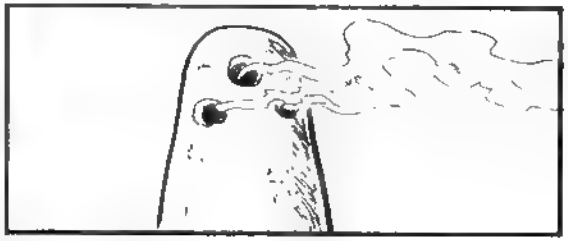
RAIN
THE WIND'S PICKING UP
WE'RE IN FOR A BLOW
KRSSSH
SSSSSHHHH


FOLK WILL
STAY IN
KRRSSH
WHSSHHH
SLSSHHH





:KOFF!
EHEM!
HEHM!
F-
FORGIVE
ME.
:KOFF!
:KOFF!



HRKK!
KOFF!
I CAN'T SHAKE THIS DAMN COUGH...
KOFF!
KOFF!

OVER MY DEAD BODY, YAGYŪ!

I BURY HIM, YOU *HEART!* IT'S MY MISSION FROM *HEAVEN!* THE SWEET *MOCHI* THAT FELL IN *MY* LAP! I'LL *NEVER* GIVE IT BACK!
HEH HEH HEH. MY LONE WOLF *MOCHI*... STILL TOO TOUGH TO EAT, BUT I'LL SINK MY TEETH INTO YOU *YET!*
ADD SOME *YAGYŪ* SPICE, AND THERE'S NOTHING *TASTIER* IN THE WORLD!
THE SHŌGUNATE ITSELF, IN THE PALM OF MY *HANDS!* BWEH HEH HEH

LET ME AT HIM!
O-TAMA!
SIR!
FETCH ME RHODODENDRON EXTRACT! I'LL TURN HIM INTO A TREMBLING PARALYTIC!
I THOUGHT I'D COOK MY ŌGAMI-MOCHI FIRST, BUT LOOK! MY YAGYŪ SPICE IS ALL READY!

SO, THE GREAT LINE OF THE YAGYŪ ENDS HERE SO SAD.

GLP GLP
HEE HEE HEE! DRINK UP, GEEZER!

I-
I DID IT!
HIS VEINS WILL CLOG, AND BURST!
RAGGED BREATH, RACING HEART...
YES RACING HEART
RAGGED BREATH . . . ?
HMM?
NO ?
HMM.

YAIEE!

YABYŪ SPICE ON ŌGAMI-MOCHIPPY HAH!
HA HA HA HA HA!!

YEE...
H-HOW...?
YOU THINK I'D VISIT YOU *UNPREPARED?*
WE YAGYU HAVE OUR *OWN* ANTIDOTE— *IBUKI BOFŪ*
AH.. ?!
I WANTED *PROOF*, AND YOU FELL FOR IT!
KNOW YOUR *STATION, KUCHIYAKU!! YOU* CONTROL THE *NATION?! ABSURD!*
ABE-NO-KA!!!

AUUGHH!
THUNK
AIIEEE!!
SUDARE JINNA., POISONED BY YOUR FOUL AFUYŌ, TOLD ME ALL. THEN HE CUT HIS OWN STOMACH!

YOU FOOL! DEVOID OF SHIDŌ IGNORANT OF A SAMURAI HEART!
I KNEW I'D HAVE TO DISPOSE OF YOU.
IT'S M-M- MUTUAL
YOU PLANNED TO HAVE ME POISON LONE WOLF AND CUB FOR YOU, AND...AND THEN.. KILL ME. I ACTED IN SELF-DEFENSE!
CHAK
EEK!

HRMPH. PROOF YOU'RE NO BUSH! TREMBLING CUR!
NGAHH!

WRITE! IN BLOOD! "I SHALL NEVER HARM THE YAGYŪ" .!

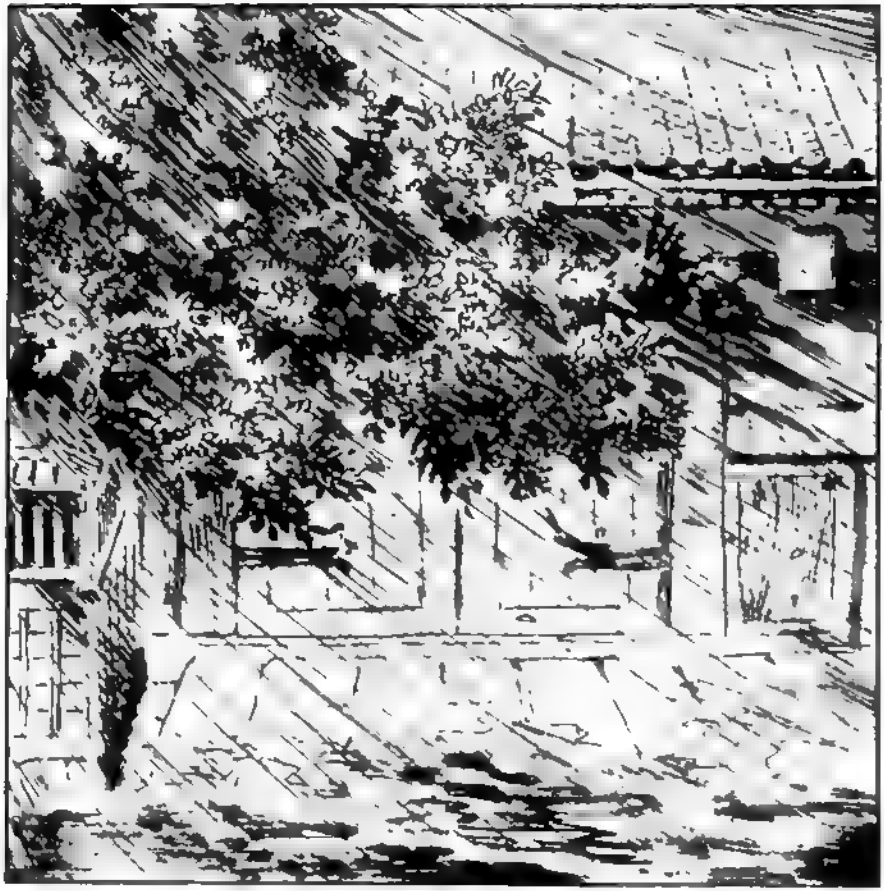
I'D CARVE YOU UP NOW, BUT. YOU'RE THE SHOGUN'S RETAINER.
SO I'LL TELL HIM ALL, AND OUR LORD SHALL COMMAND— SEPPUKU! PREPARE TO DIE!

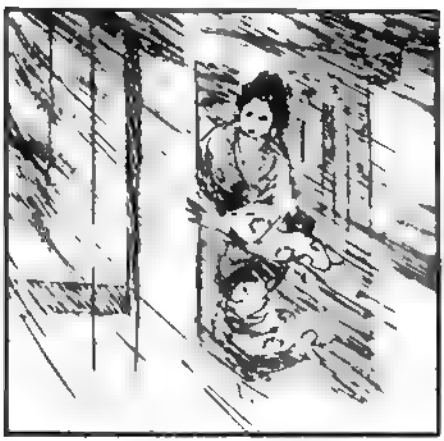
WHSSSHH
IAK
KIAK

DON'T TRY TO FLEE.
ONE STEP OUTSIDE, AND I'LL HAVE YOU CUT DOWN.
KCHAK
WHSSHH
KRRSSHH
AT LEAST BE A BUSHI IN DEATH!
KRRSSH
SKRRSH

FWHOOSSHH
KRRSSH
MY PALANQUIN!
G-GET ME OUTTA HERE!
D-DAMN!
CUT MY OWN TUMMY?!
NOT ME! BRRR!

HURRY!
MY POISON POUCH!
DON'T FORGET!
O-TAMA! O-HANA! O-MENO! O-KUCHI! YOU ALL COME!
HURRY!
FASTER!!
WHSSSH
KSSSH
WHOOSHH
SSSSH





KREEE
MOVE IT! HURRY!
WHSHHH
KSSHH
SKSSSH

WHERE ABE NO KAII GOES WE FIND LONE WOLF!
WE NEED ONLY FOLLOW. TANOSHI'S TRAIL LEADS BUT ONE WAY..
HE HAS TO KILL LONE WOLF BEFORE OUR LORD HANDS DOWN HIS JUDGEMENT! REPORT HIS VICTORY, AND BEG FOR MERCY!

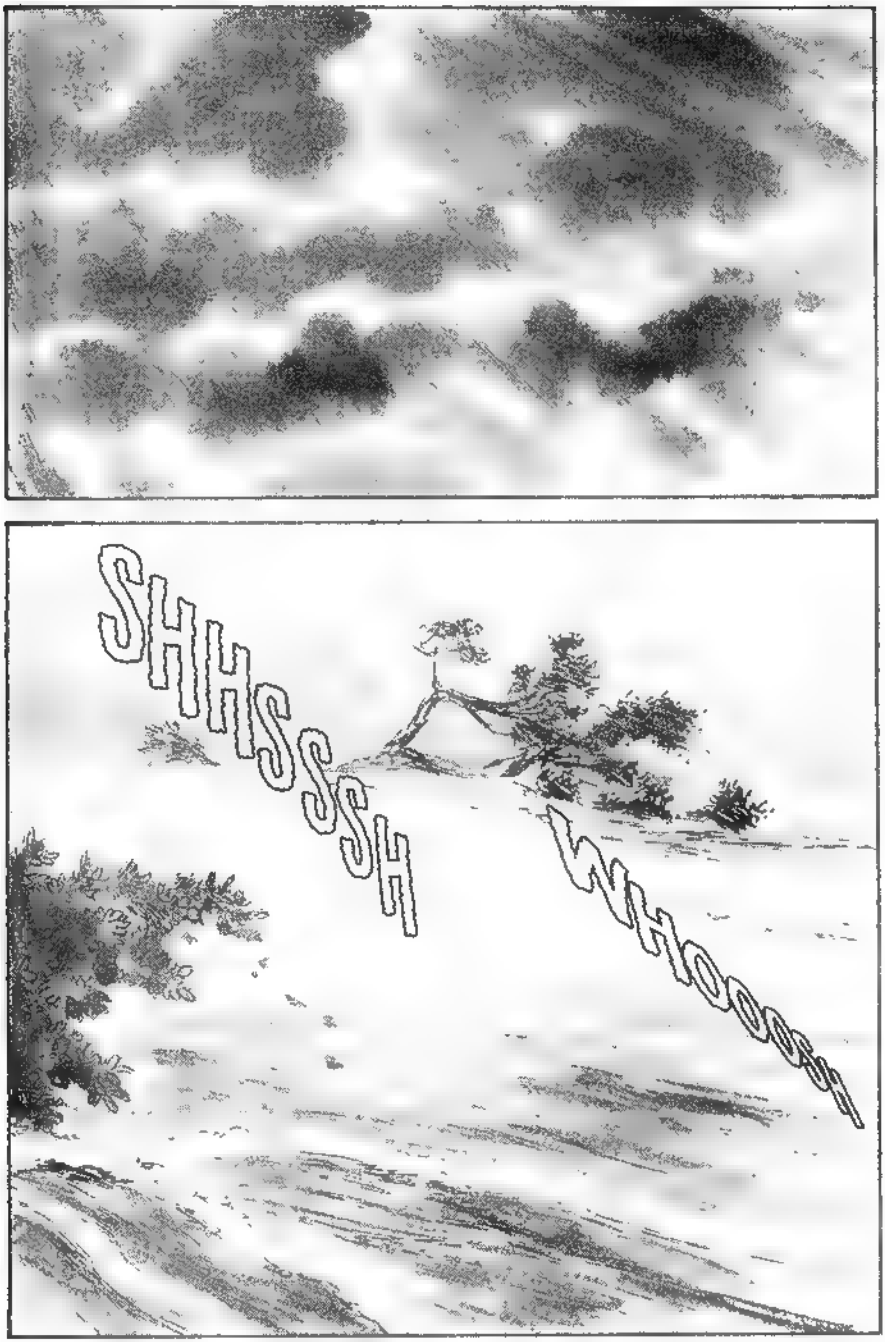
BUT I WON'T LET HIM! I'LL KILL THEM ALL, LONE WOLF AND TANOSHI TOGETHER!
NOW, ON THE WINGS OF STORM, WE BECOME THE WILDFIRE! BURNING ALL BEFORE US!

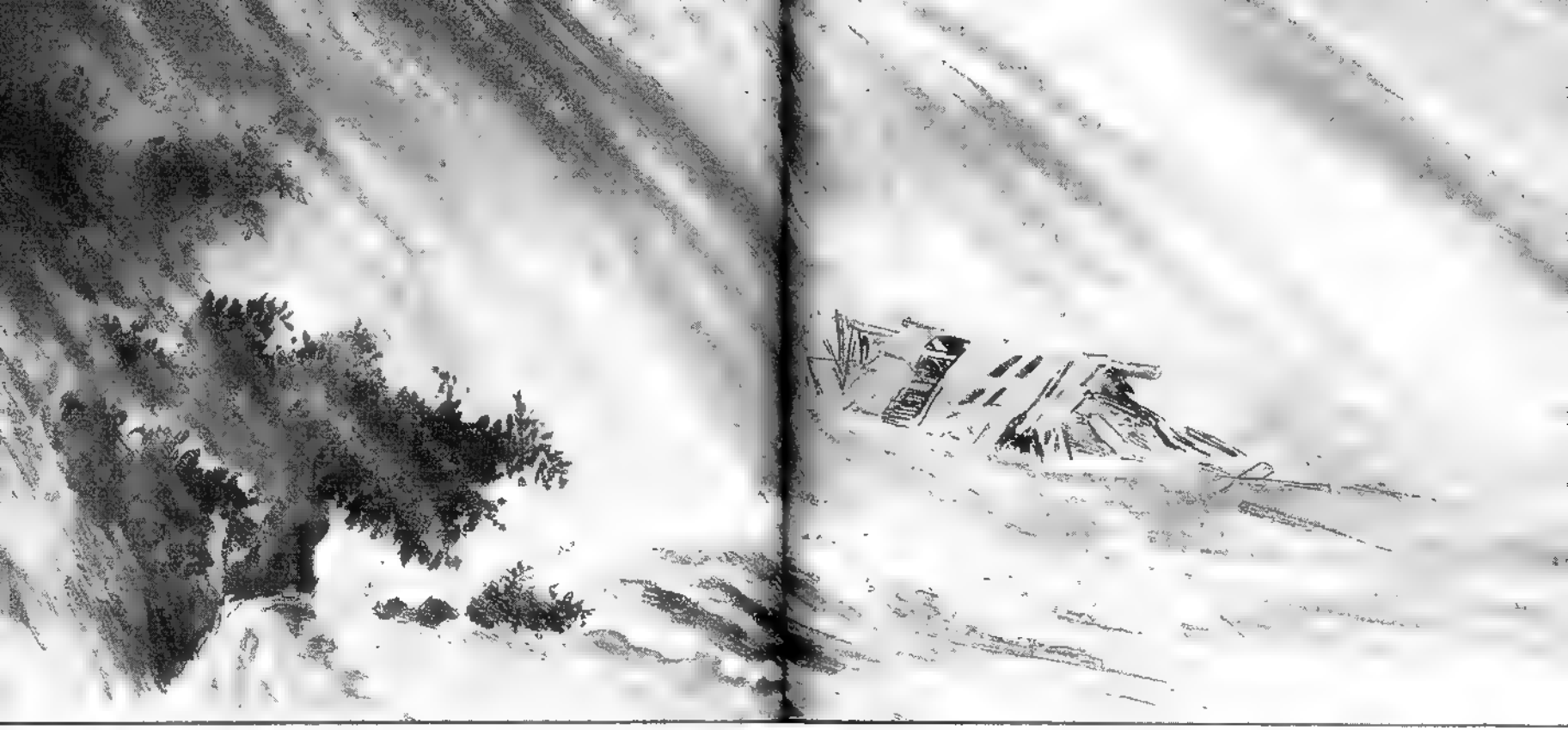
ADVANCE!!
RYAHH!!

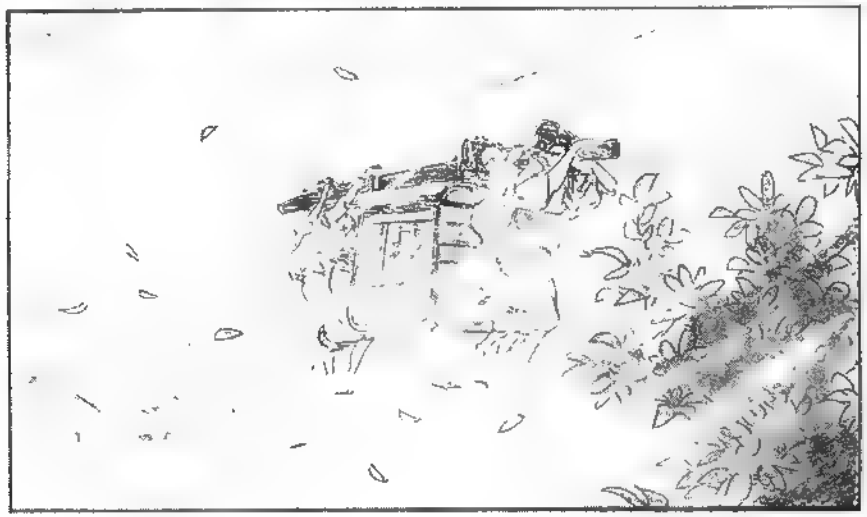
#MANGAPROJECT

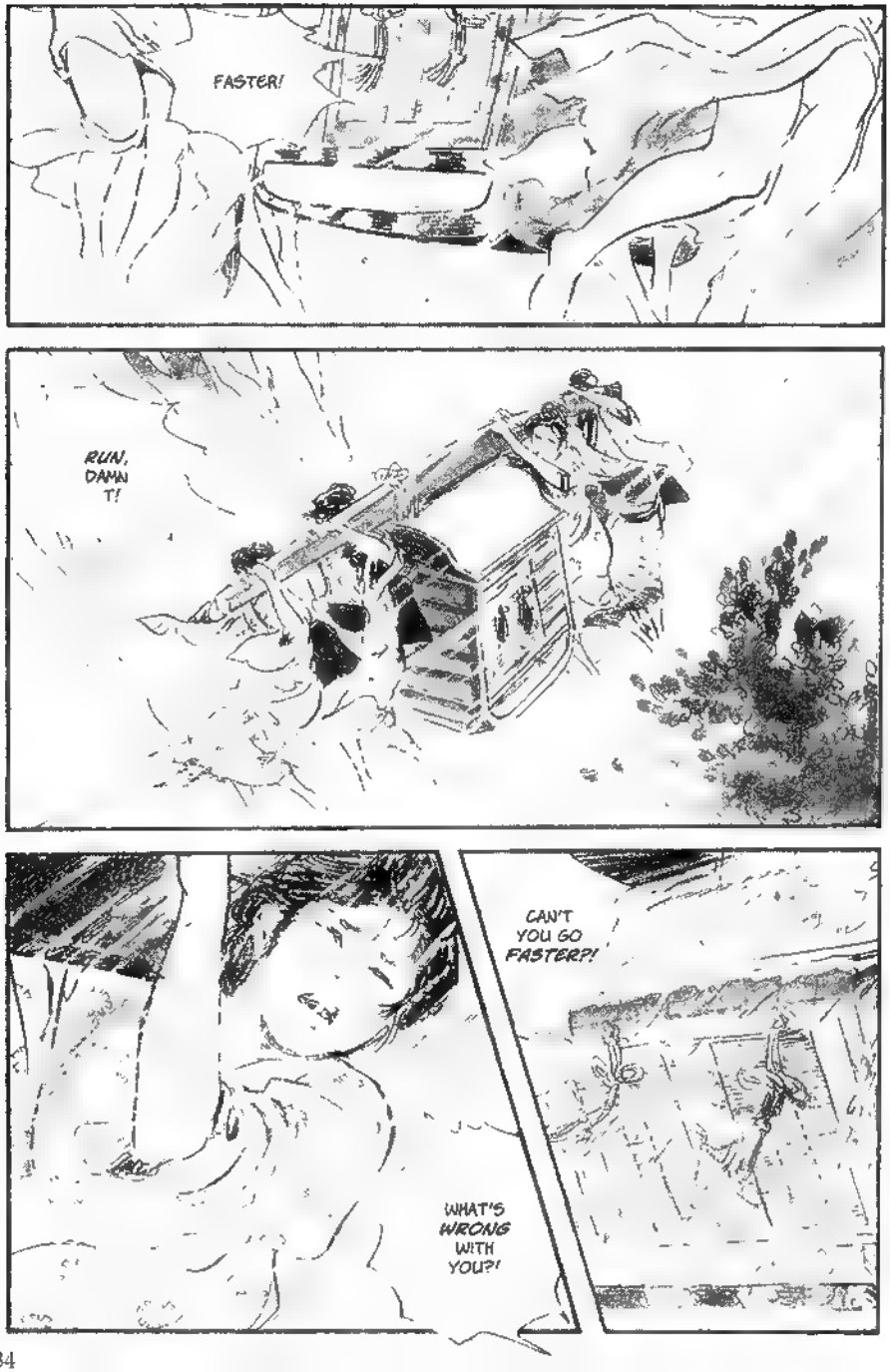
the hundred and fifth

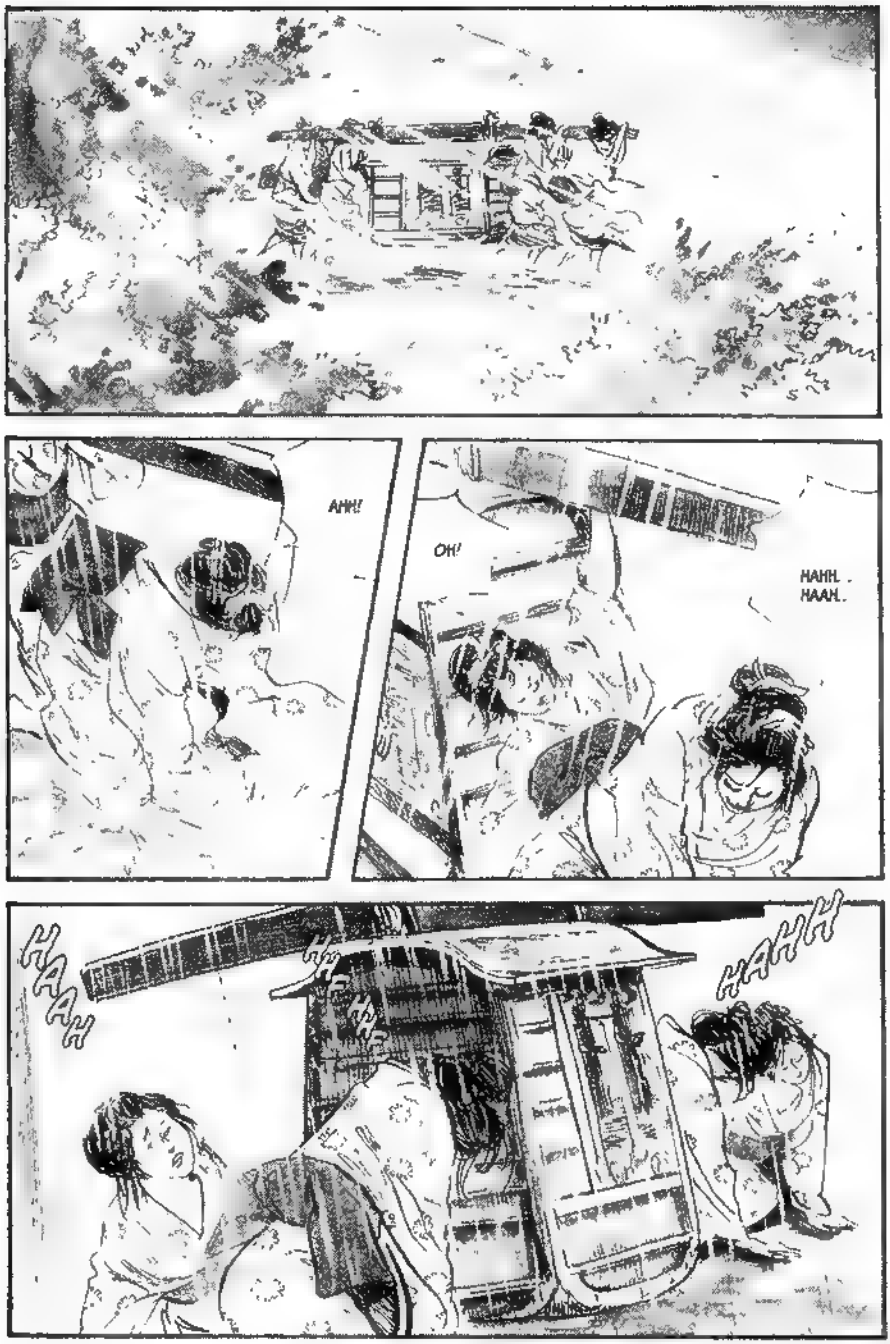
Fire, Water, and Poison


SHHSSSH
SHOOSH



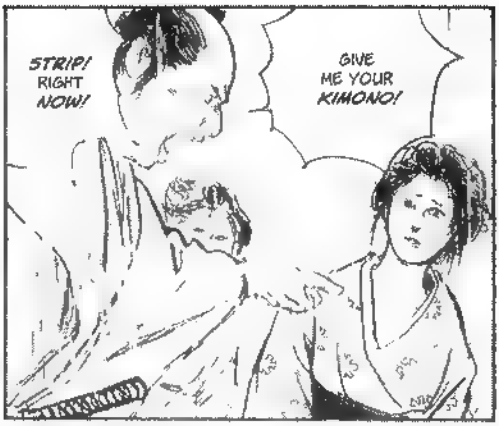



FASTER!
RUN, DAMN IT!
CAN'T YOU GO FASTER?!
WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU?!


AHH!
OH!
HAHH.
HAAH.
HAAH
HAHH

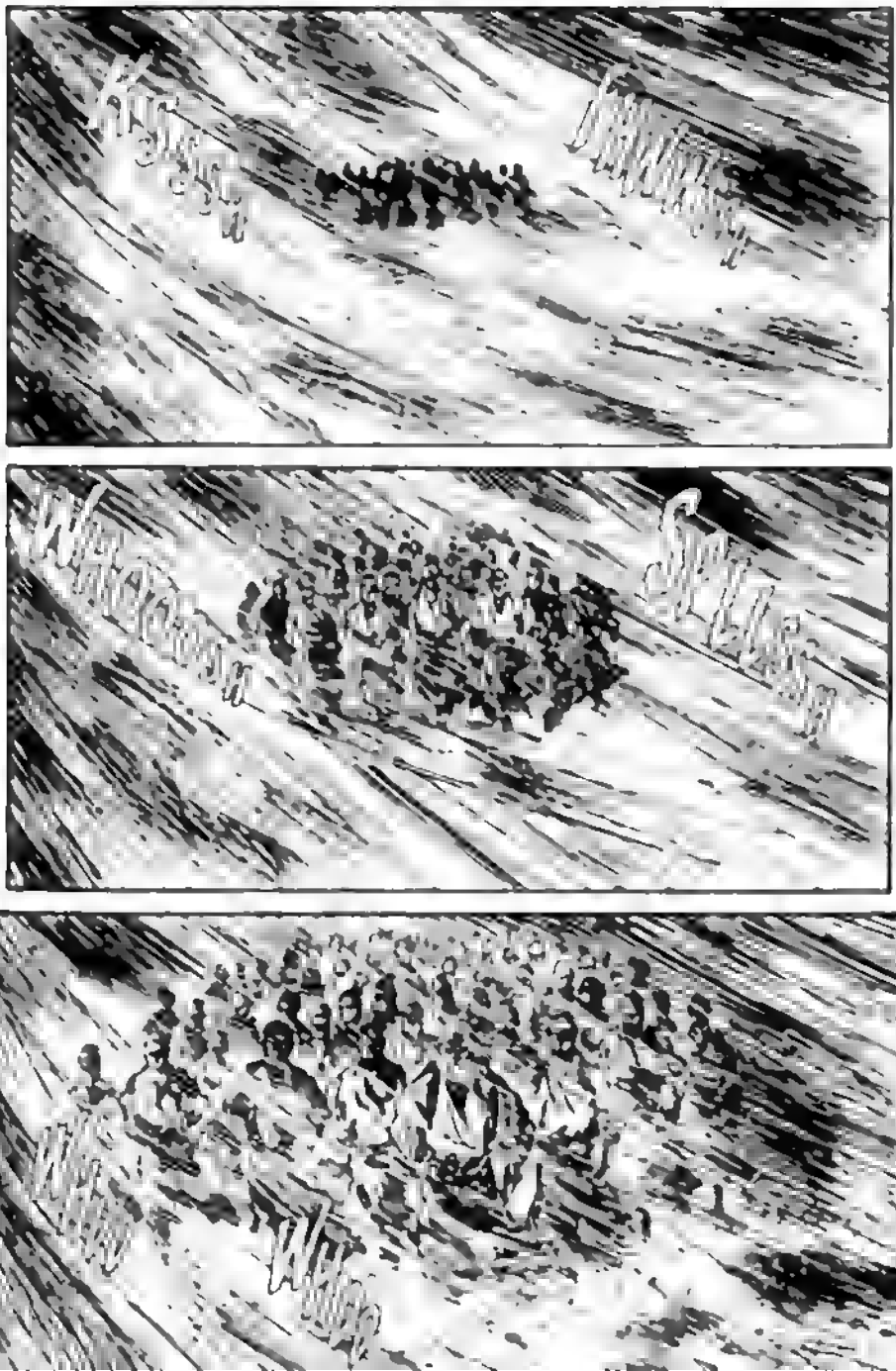
DAMNATION!
WORTHLESS SLACKERS!
NNG!
AAH! CLOAK AND HAT!
F-FORGIVE US, S R! THERE WASN'T TIME FOR RAINGEAR...
YOU IDIOTS! I'LL GET WET!

YOU WANT ME TO GET SOAKED?!


STRIP! RIGHT NOW!
GIVE ME YOUR KIMONO!

HURRY! THE YAGYŪ !

SWAPP



WHERE'S
OOH'M
UUM

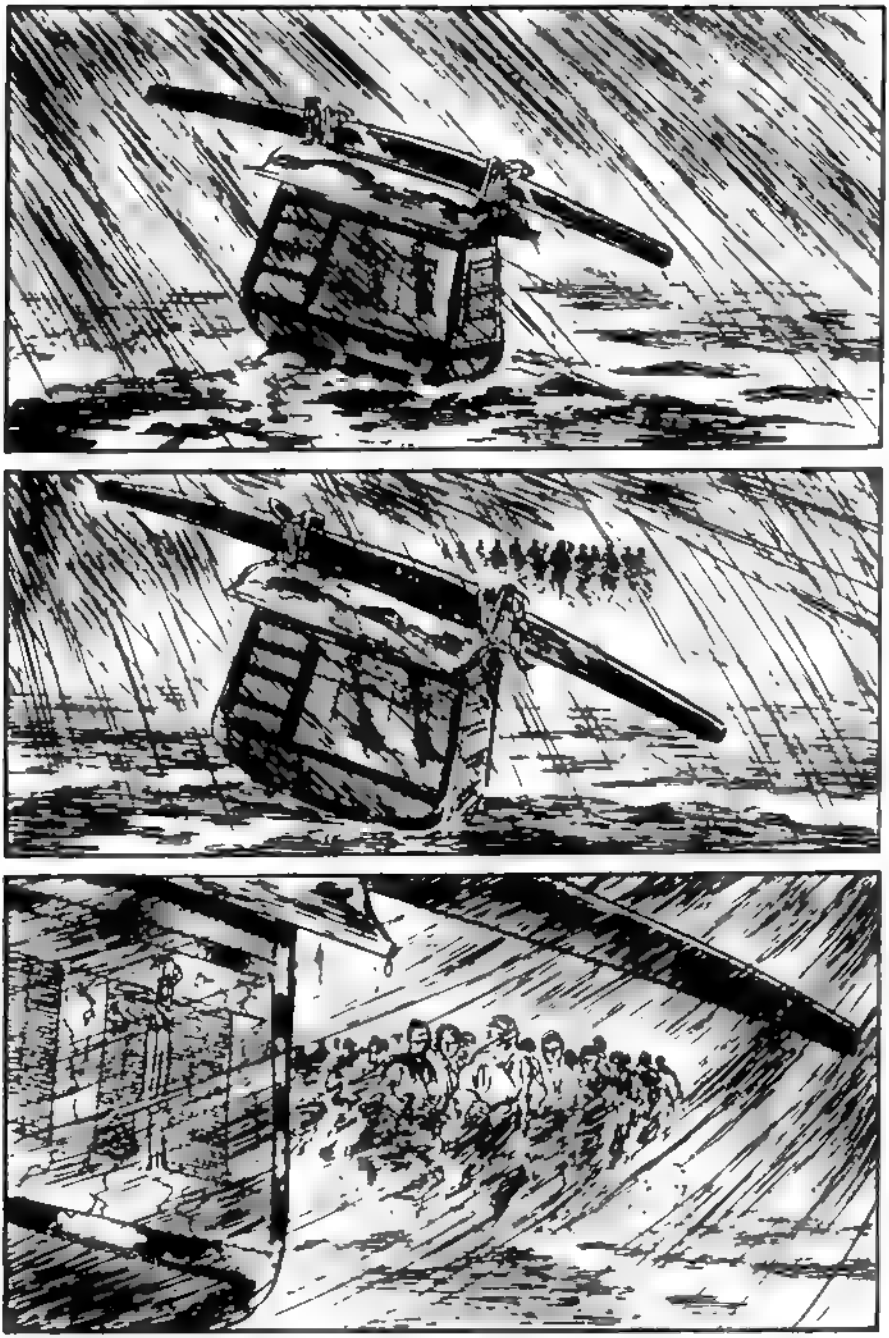
I'M STILL GETTING WET!
O-NANI O KUCHI YOU STOP TOO! SHALL FEED ME!
DO IT NOW!
MUSSEPT

SPLASH
SPLASH
SPLASH

FASTER! THE YAGYŪ'LL GET ME!
HURRY UP!
BUT THEY'LL STILL CATCH UP
I HAVE TO BUY TIME. TIME!
O TAMA!
Y- YES, SIR?
STAY HERE! SLOW DOWN THE YAGYŪ'S MEN!
S-SIR!

O-TAMA!
YOU'RE MY LIFE! I LOVE YOU MORE THAN ANYTHING IN THE WORLD!
SUCK!
OH, YOU'RE WET, POOR DEAR.
AHH! GOZEN-SAMA!
PLEASE, O-TAMA? WAIT FOR ME BY THE RIVER SANZU? AFTER I'VE KILLED LONE WOLF, I'LL FOLLOW YOU THERE.
THE YAGYŪ ARE AFTER ME. I'M DOOMED TO DIE. YET WE HAVE TO BUY TIME, TOGETHER...

I BEG YOU, O-TAMA!
I PROMISE, GOZEN-SAMA.
OH, HOW SAD OH, HOW TRAGIC.
MY POISON KIT
I TRUST YOU, O-TAMA!



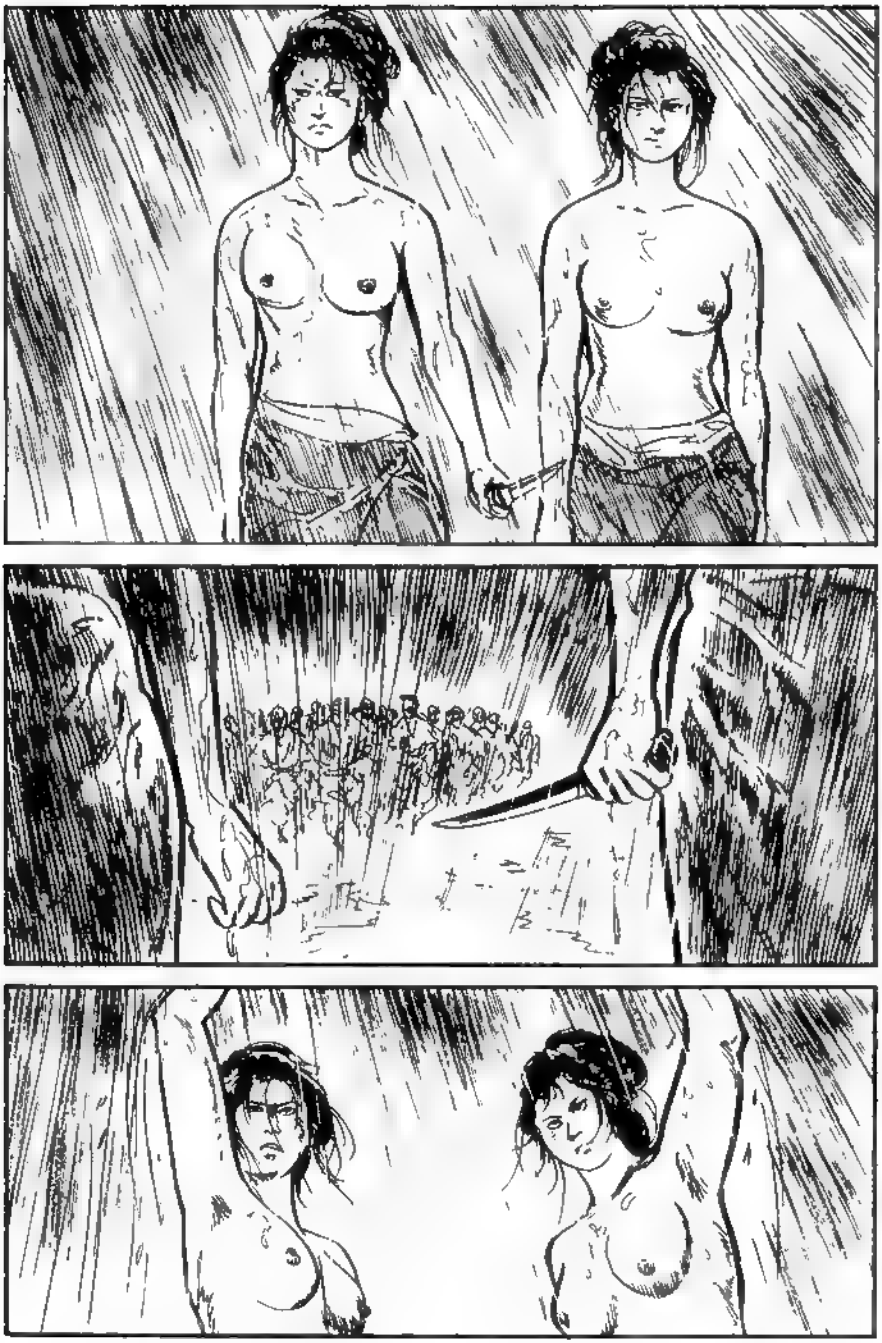
WHOO
WHOO
WHOO
WHOO
WHOO
WHOO
WHOO
WHOO

WHOO
WHOO
WHOO

FHWSSH

STEP ASIDE!
NO MERCY, WOMAN OR NO!

SPANGG



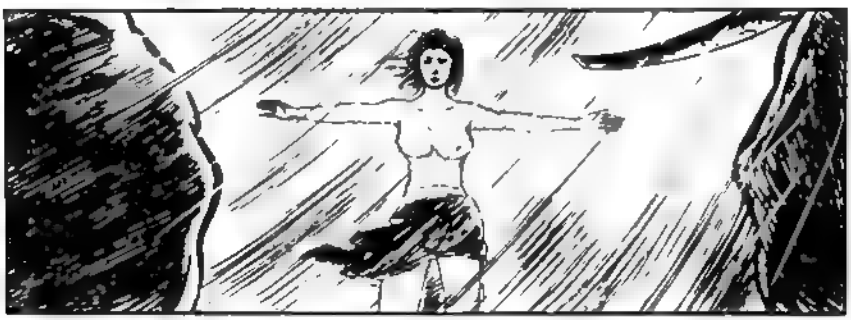
Pff
Pff
Pff
ALIGH!
HRRK!
SHNK!

STRYCHNINE
?!
FWIT

SHRRRK

KSSSH
WHOOSH
O-MEMO!
O-KUCHI!
O-TAHA!
O-HANA!
I'M SAD! SO VERY SAD!
OH, THE SORROW!

WHOO
WHOO
SPASSH!
SPRSH



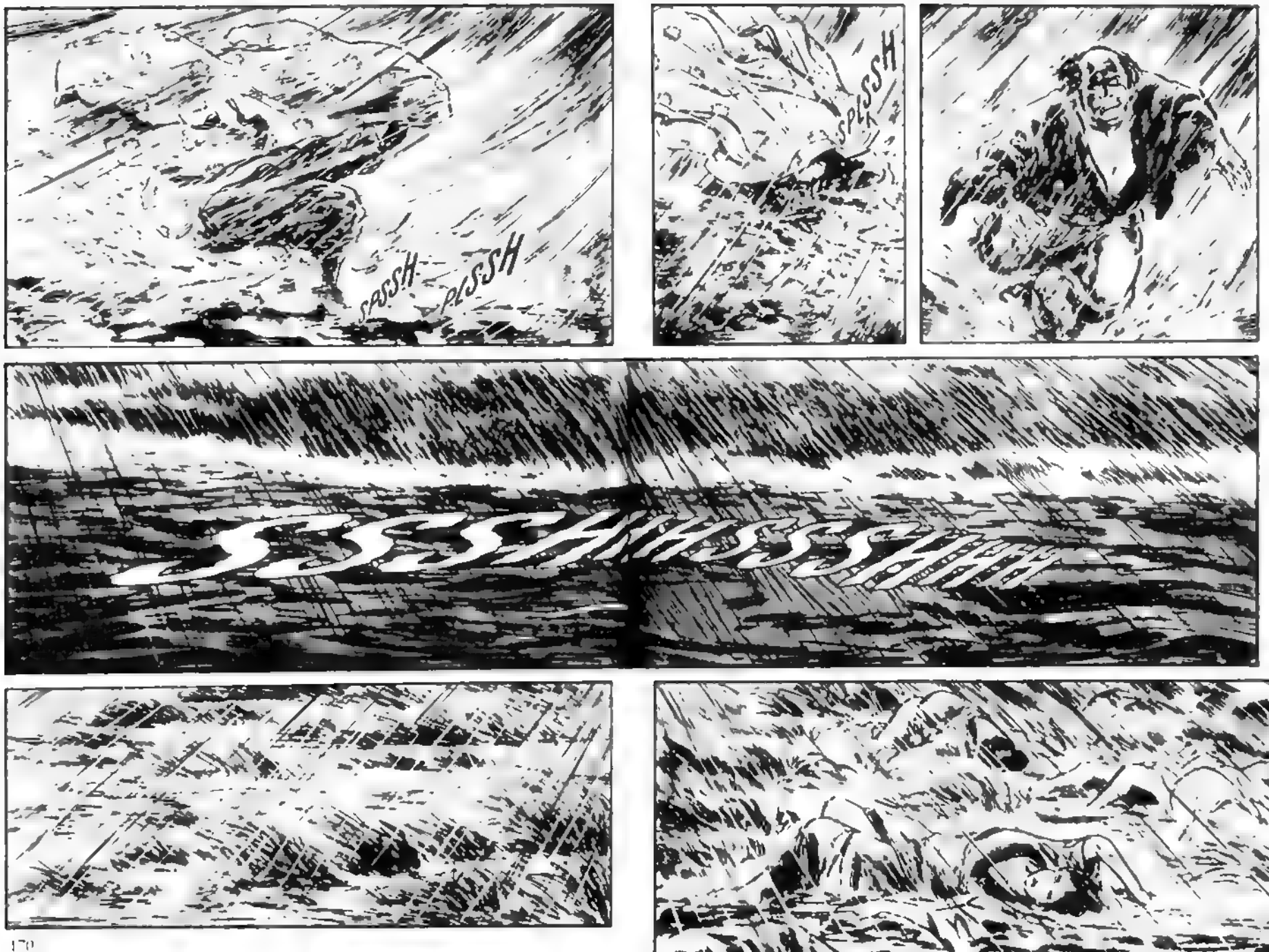
DAK!
SPLASH
SPLASH
AGAHK!

RRG!
ACID!

SHRK
HAIEE

CHOK

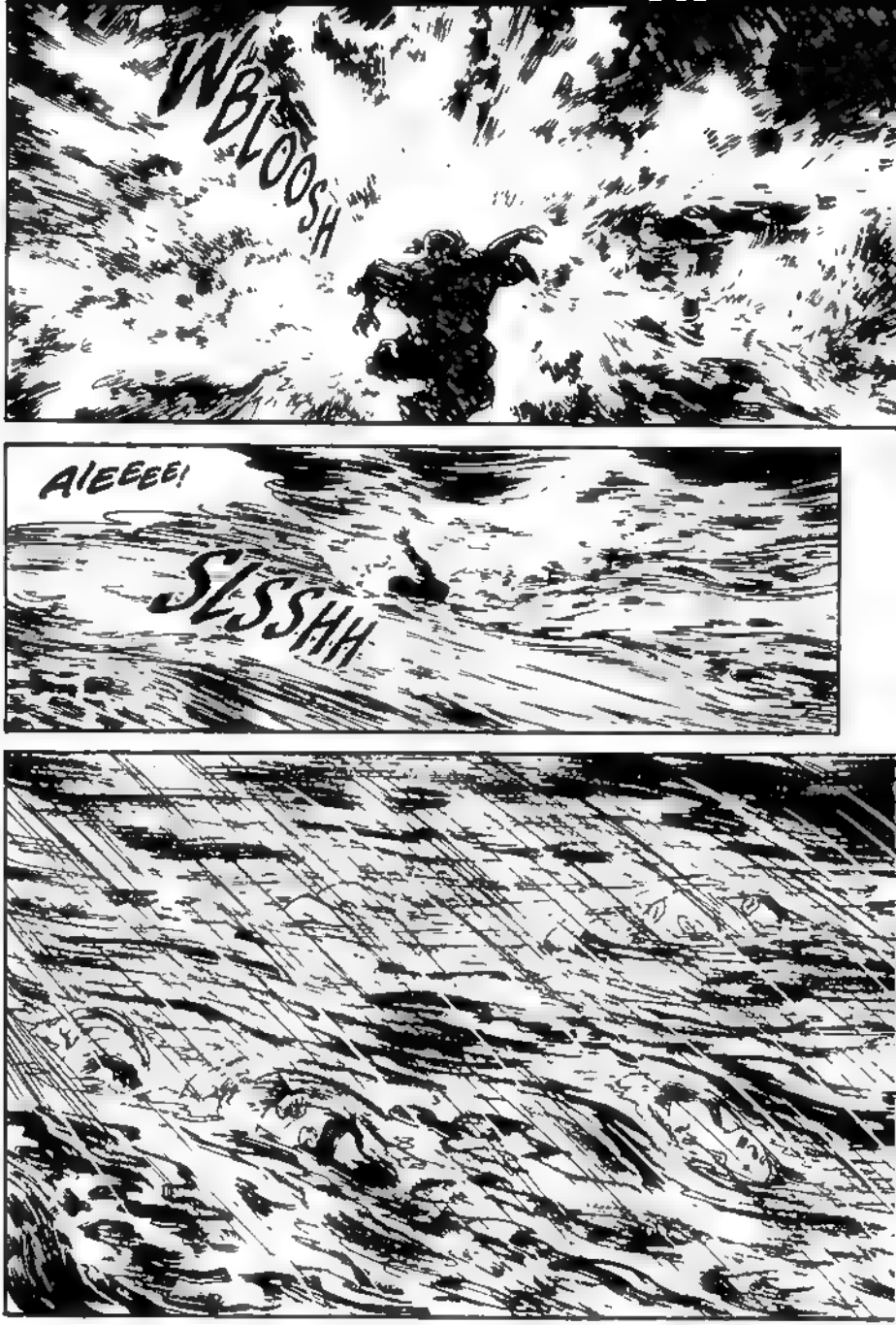
FEARSOME WOMEN!
YOU GAVE YOUR LIVES TO BUY TIME FOR ABE-NO-KAII?!
SPASSH
PISSH


SPASSH
PLSSSH
SPLSSH

UUH
?
AHH
?!

IT'S O-TOSHI!
OH, MY POOR O-TOSHI!
DEAR O-TOSHI.
BUT LONE WOLF..
WHERE?!
O-TOSHI! WHERE DID HE GO!

OHH!! THANK YOU, O-TOSHI!
YOU SERVE ME ALWAYS, EVEN IN DEATH!
RMMBBB
BLSSH
RMMBB


WBLOOSH
AIEEEE!
SLSSHH

:blbb:
HKRP!
UHF
HFF!
HAHH!
KUHF!
HNNG!
AH..!

NGH.
NNG..
SLSSSH
RMMBBBB

SKRRASSH
WHBLOOSHH
RMMB
RMMB

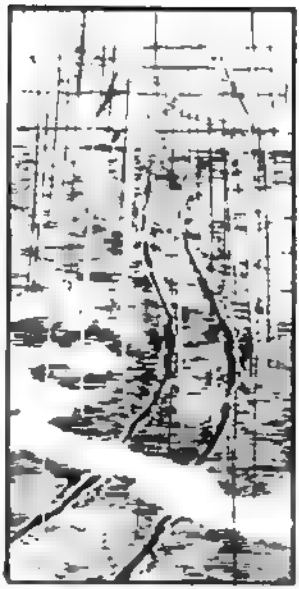
RMB
RMB

RMMMB

RECOVER THOSE BODIES!
WASSAT

MM. LONG SWORD, REVERSE STROKE. HIS WORK.
IN WHICH CASE, ITTŌ FOUGHT WITH KAII'S NIGHTHAWKS HERE.
WHAT'S AHEAD?

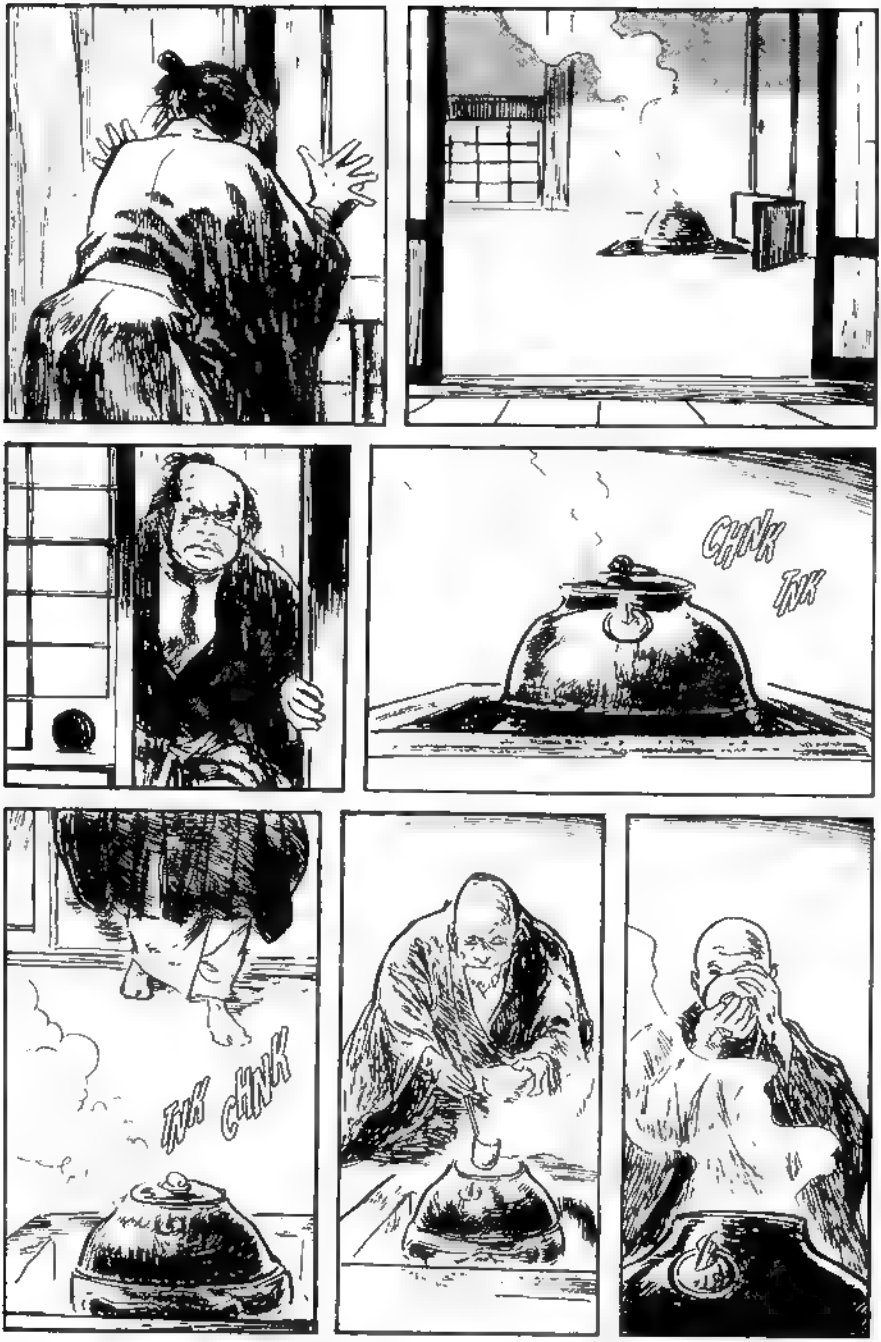
MY LORD.
THE BORDER BETWEEN
KUROBIKI SHUBIKI EDO,
THEN FUKAGAWA
WE'LL GO AROUND!
WHOOSH
WHOOSH
HAHH!
HHF!
HAHF!



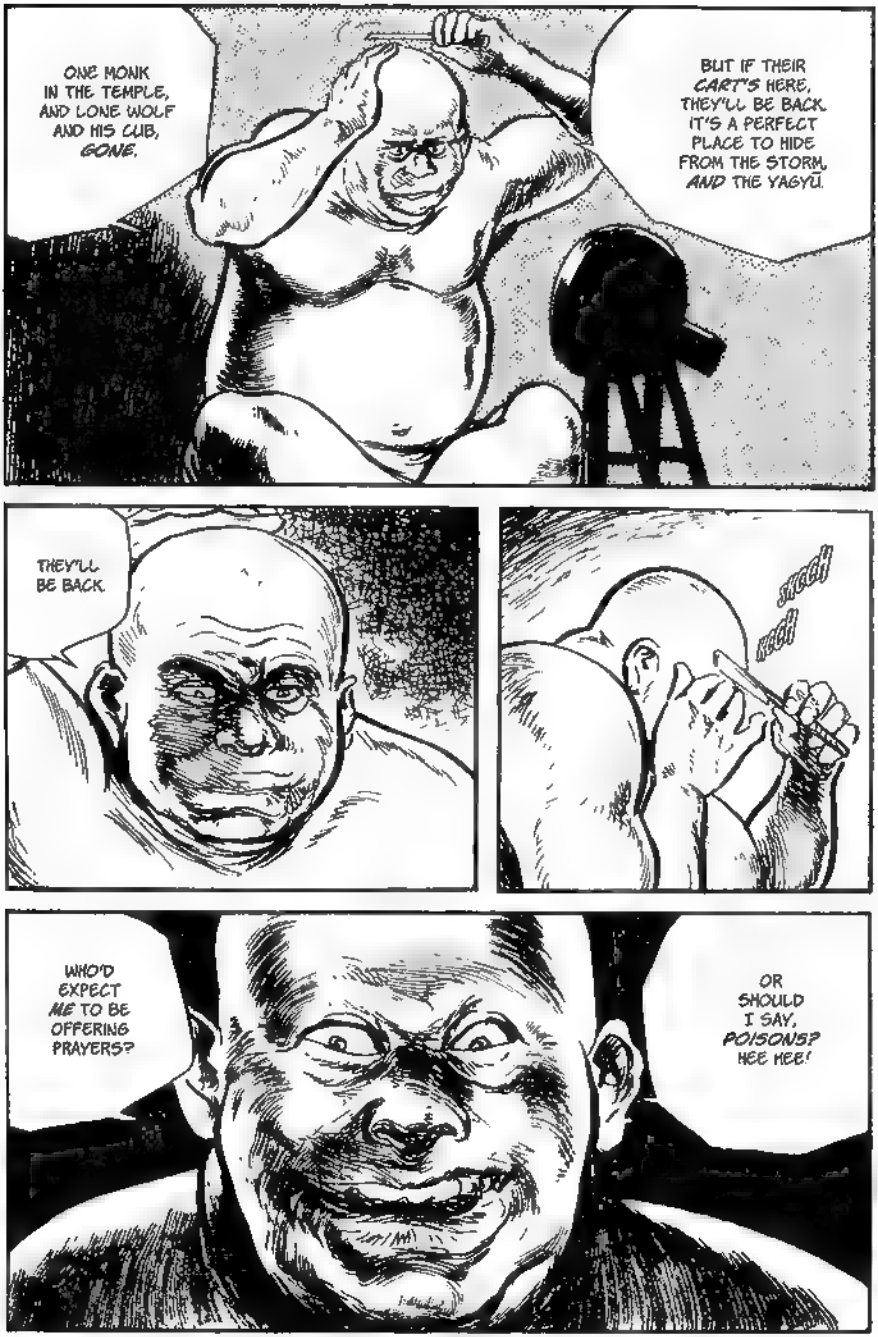
HE'S
HE'S
HERE!

AND
THE YAGYU
HAVEN'T
CAUGHT UP
ALL THIS
RAIN...

IT'S.
TRUE.


CHNK
TNK
TNK CHNK

GHERKK!

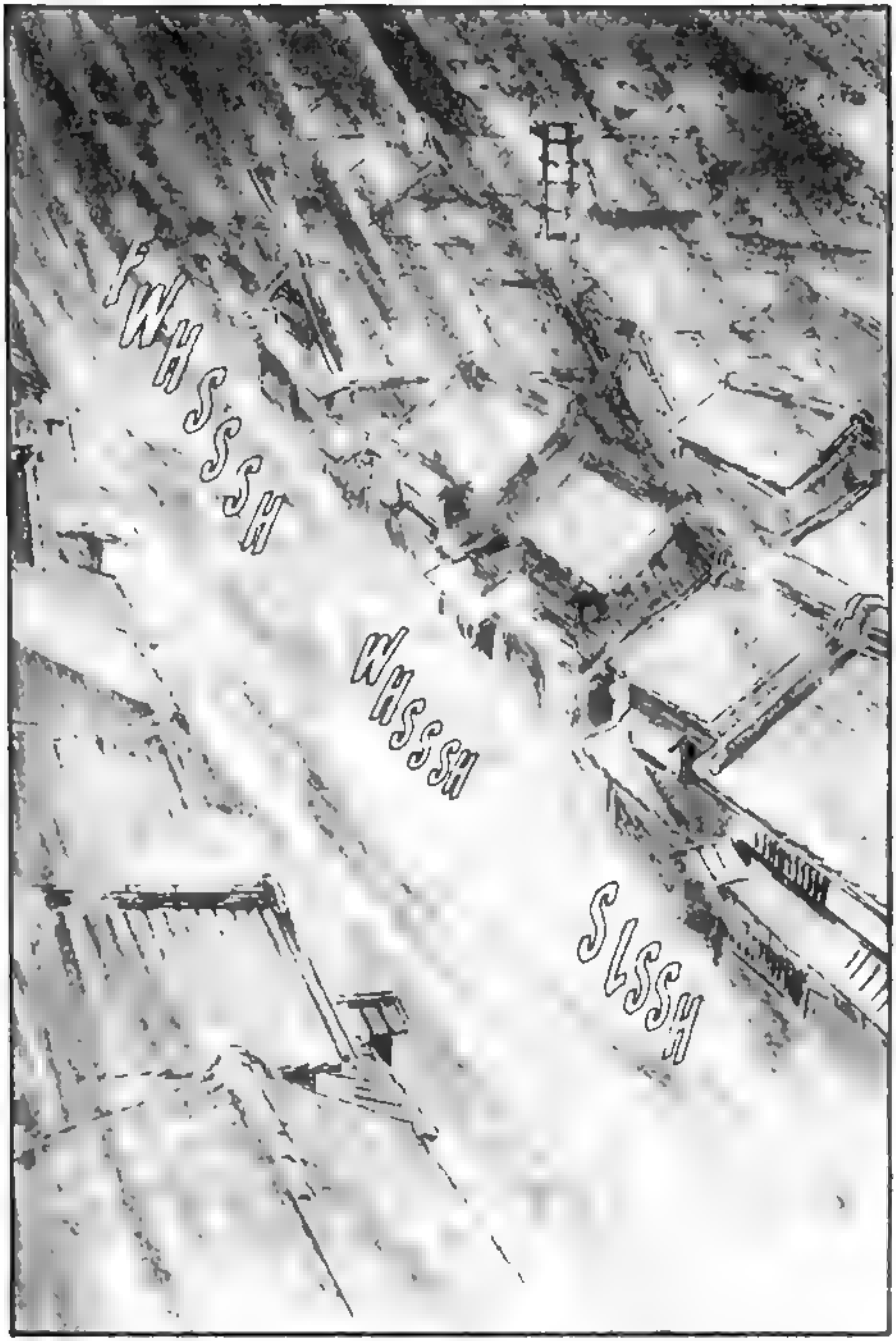

ONE MONK IN THE TEMPLE, AND LONE WOLF AND HIS CUB, GONE.
BUT IF THEIR CART'S HERE, THEY'LL BE BACK. IT'S A PERFECT PLACE TO HIDE FROM THE STORM, AND THE YAGYU.
THEY'LL BE BACK.
SKRCH! SKRCH!
WHO'D EXPECT ME TO BE OFFERING PRAYERS?
OR SHOULD I SAY, POISONS? HEE HEE!

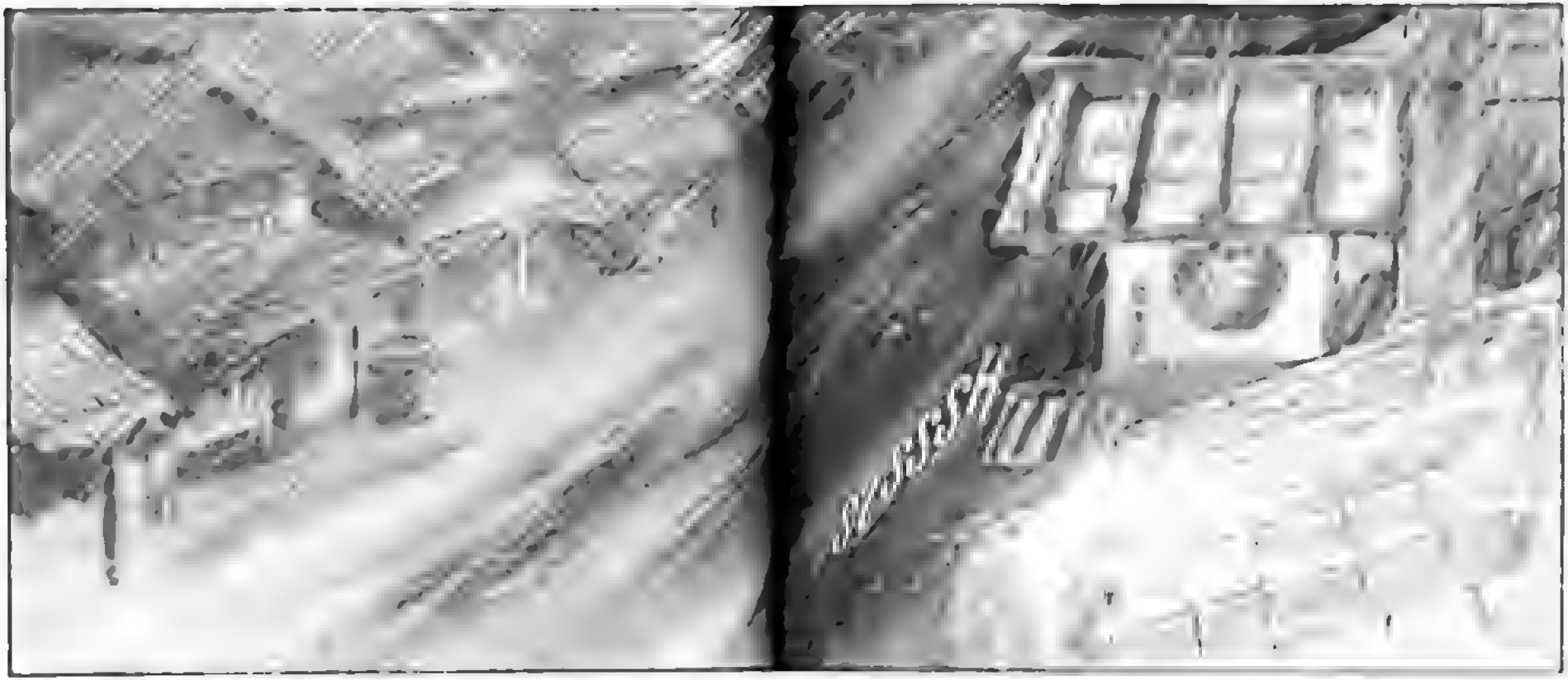
THEY ALSO SERVE WHO SIT AND WAIT
BWEH HEH HEH.

#MANGAPROJECT

the hundred and sixth

Fragrance of Death


FWHSSSH
WHSSSH
SLSSH



*TANGOYA
TEXTILES
AND KIMONO

YES SIR, YES SIR! COMING
FORGIVE THE LATE HOUR WE'D LIKE YOU TO CUT SOME

NO TOMOR-ROW !!!
THERE'S A STORY HERE
AND WE NEVER TURN AWAY A CUSTOMER LET HIM IN.
SIR!
AHH!

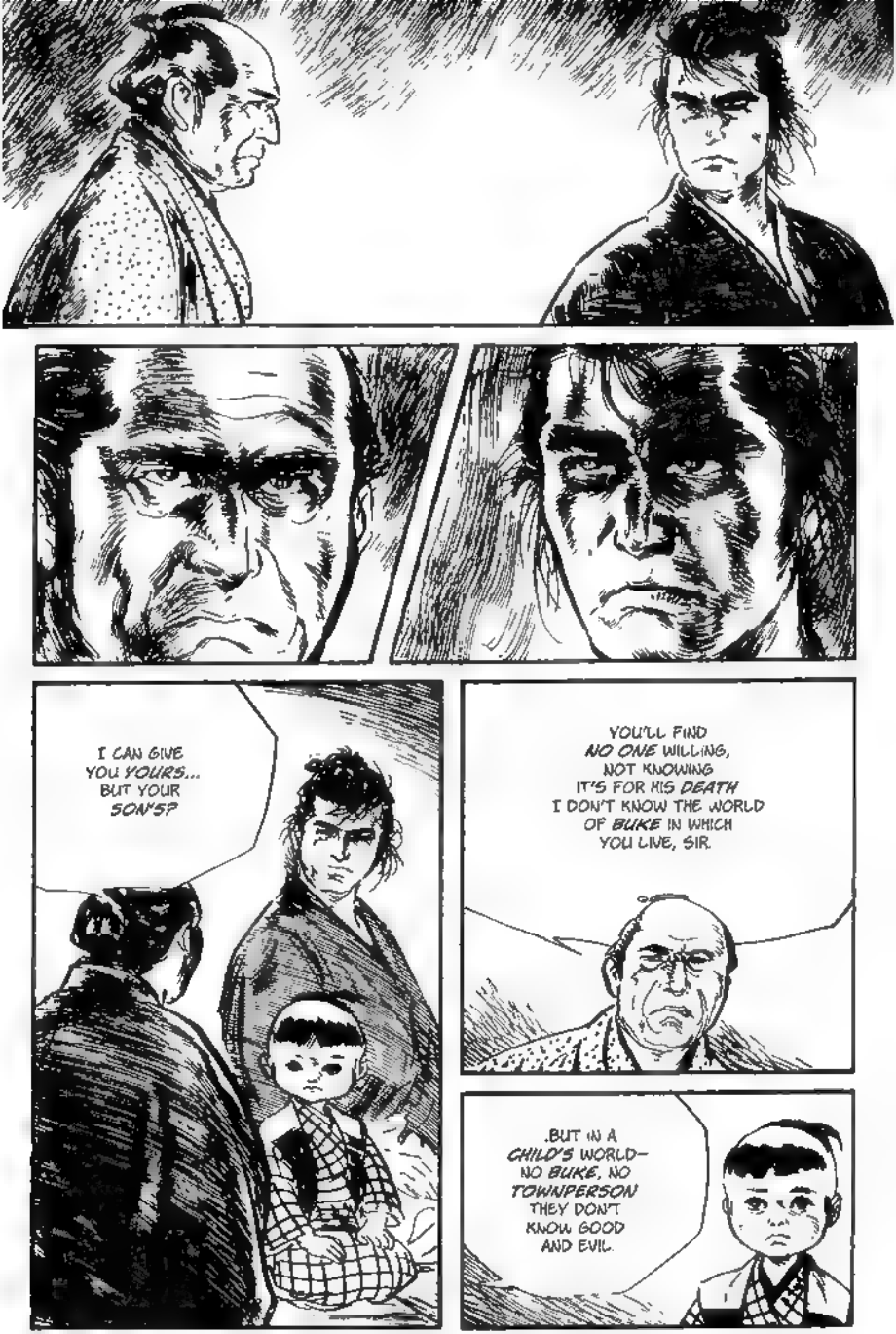
DEAR ME... SOAKED TO THE SKIN
YOU'RE DRENCHED, POOR BOY.

DRY CLOTHES. OUR CLIENT'S SON MUSTN'T CATCH COLD
OUR THANKS, BUT WE'RE FINE.
WE'RE USED TO WIND AND RAIN.
THEN, AT VERY LEAST.
MY THANKS.

WE'RE IN FOR A REAL STORM. PLEASE BE CAREFUL.

PLEASE. HOT TEA
WE'RE IN YOUR DEBT
SUCH A WELL-MANNERED BOY
NOW, YOU SPOKE OF HABUTAEP

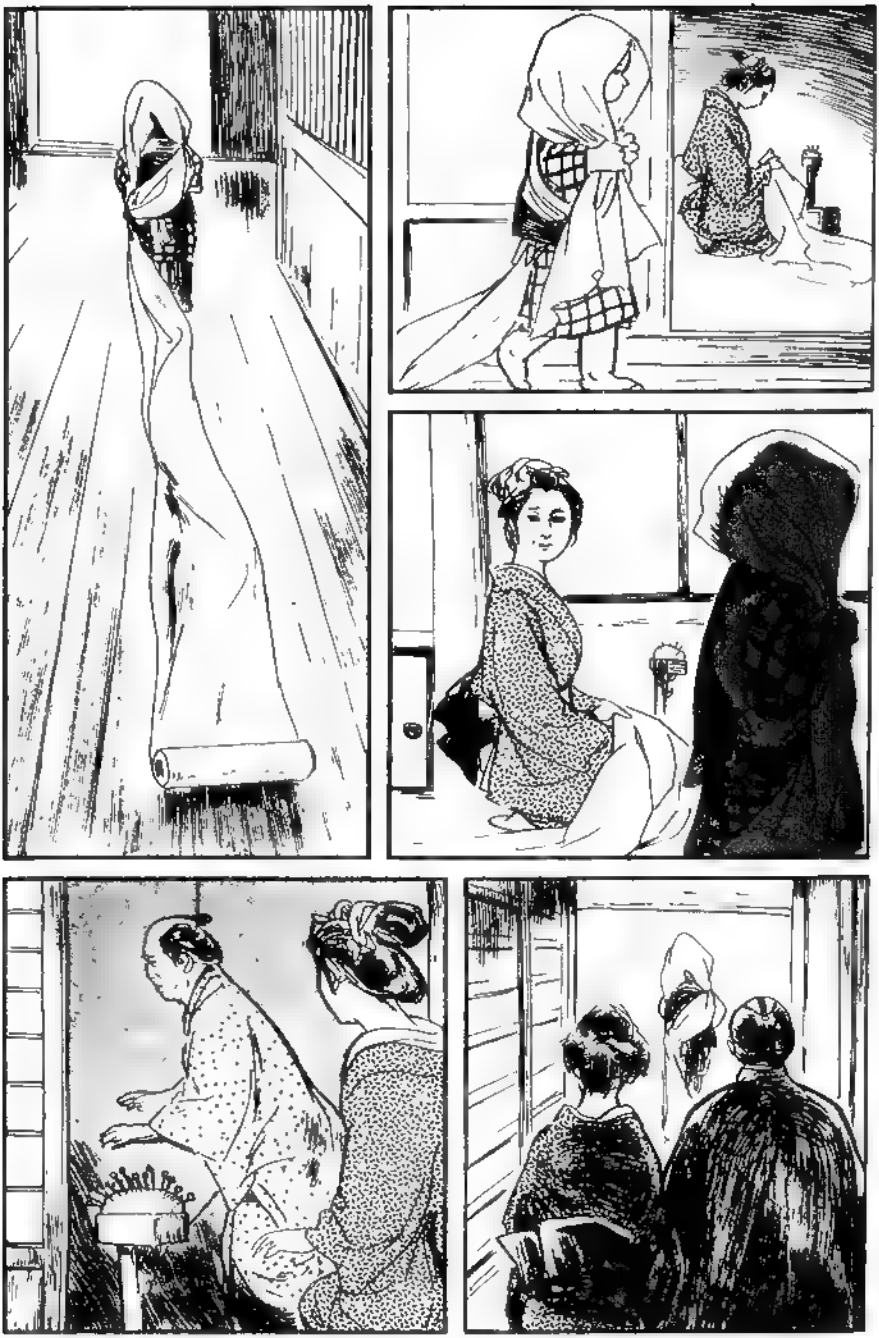
HOW MUCH?!
ENOUGH FOR MYSELF AND MY SON.
BUT.. FUNERAL CLOTHES?
WILL THIS DO?
I DON'T KNOW YOUR TALE, SIR, BUT I WILL NOT SELL.

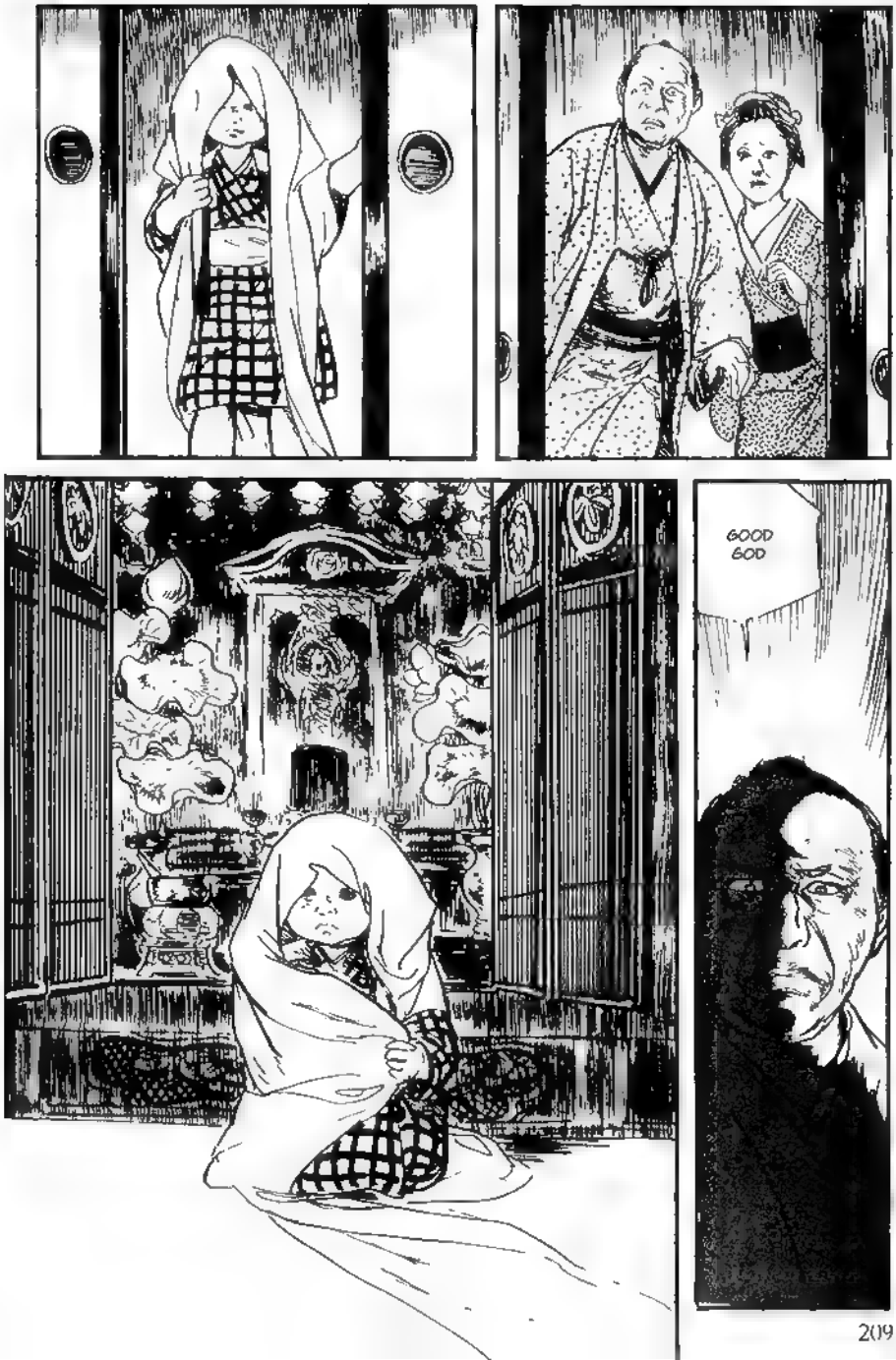

I CAN GIVE YOU *YOURS*... BUT YOUR *SON'S?*
YOU'LL FIND *NO ONE* WILLING, NOT KNOWING IT'S FOR HIS *DEATH* I DON'T KNOW THE WORLD OF *BUKE* IN WHICH YOU LIVE, SIR.
.BUT IN A *CHILD'S* WORLD– NO *BUKE*, NO *TOWNPERSON* THEY DON'T KNOW GOOD AND EVIL

I CAN'T STOP A PARENT FROM TAKING HIS CHILD WITH HIM. BUT I *WILL NOT* HELP HIM.
SHOULD THIS CHILD DIE IN OUR OWN *HABUTAE*...
I WOULD NEVER SLEEP WELL AGAIN. I *REFUSE*
I SAID NOTHING OF DEATH.
YET YOU SAID YOU HAVE NO TOMORROW.
I HEARD YOU CLEARLY
I DO NOT FORCE HIM.
IT'S *HIS* WILL.

GOOD HEAVENS, SIR! YOU SAY...
.THIS CHILD WANTS TO WEAR ROBES OF DEATH?
HE CAN'T...

LITTLE BOY DO YOU KNOW WHAT IT *MEANS* TO WEAR WHITE SILK?
WAIT! *WHERE . . .?!*




GOOD
GOD

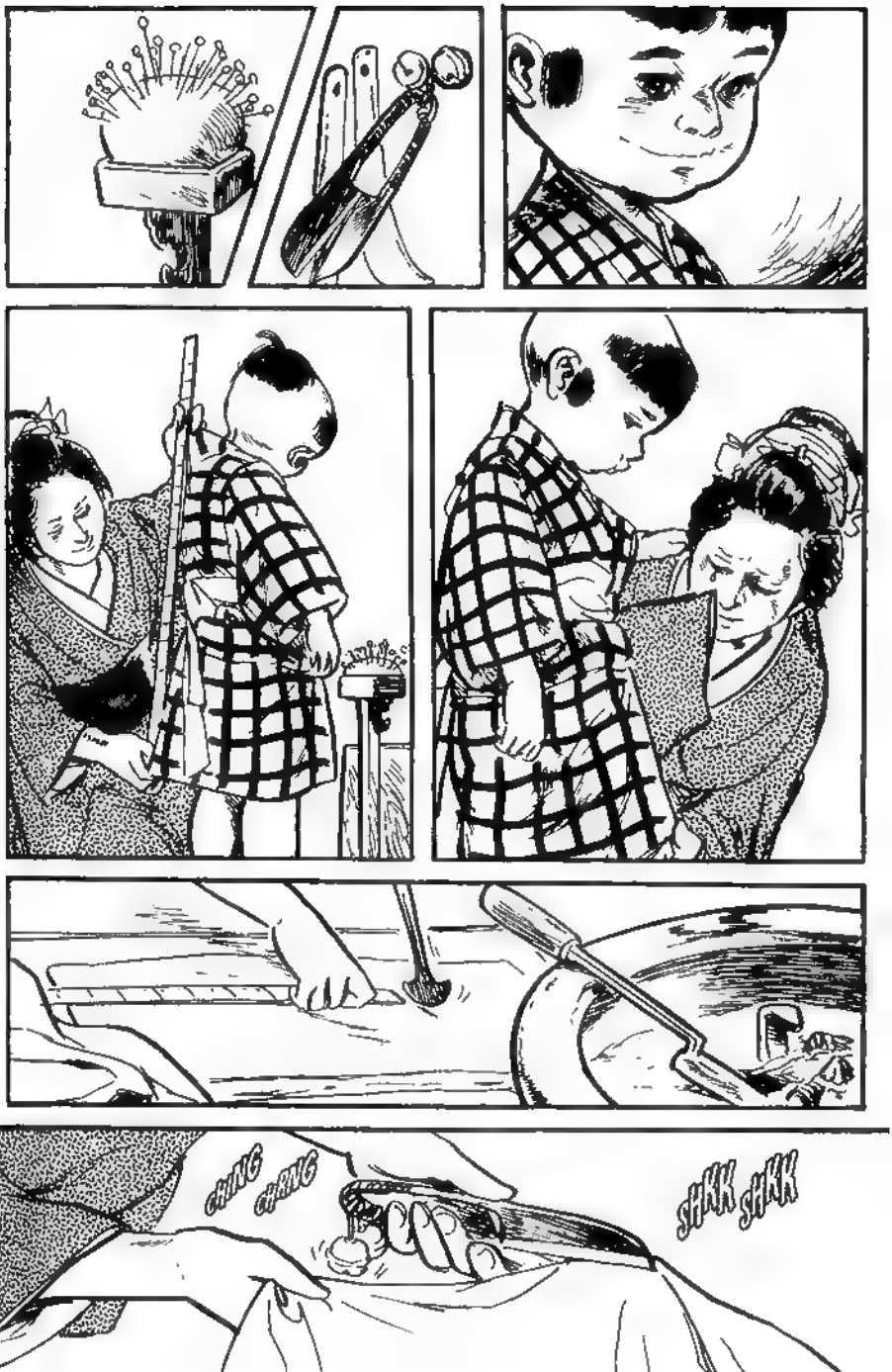
FORGIVE ME. I'LL SAY NOTHING MORE.
I'LL CUT YOUR HABUTAE
WE THANK YOU.
HOW WOULD YOU LIKE IT SEWN?
WE NEED IT AT SUNRISE, SO THERE IS NO TIME TO HAVE IT TAILORED.
WE'LL JUST WRAP IT AROUND US.

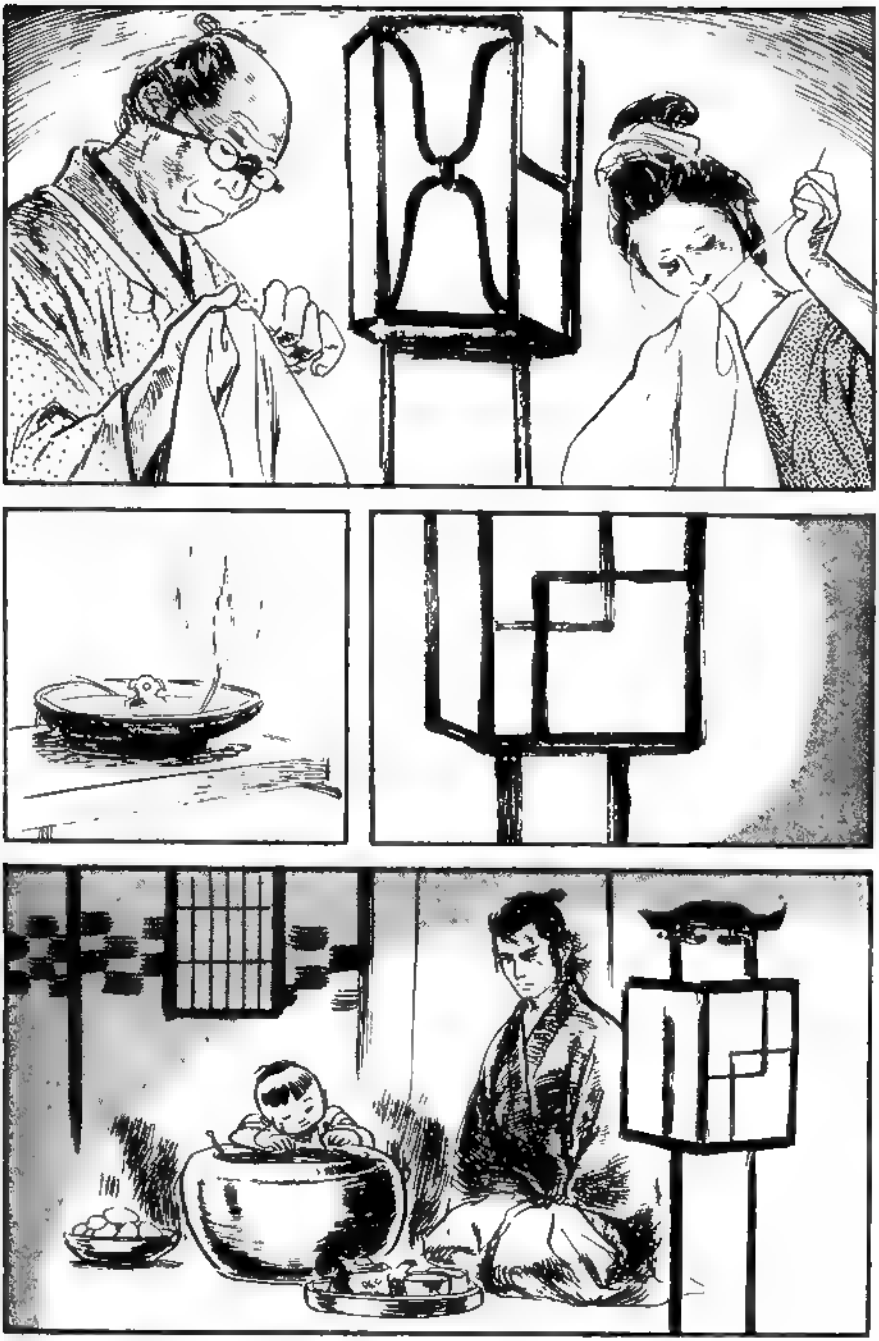
BUT IF THEY COULD BE READY BY MORNING..?
YOU WOULD DO THIS?

OF COURSE! MY WIFE AND I, TOGETHER
I HELD MANY A NEEDLE WHEN I WAS YOUNG.

WE'D DO ANYTHING FOR THIS YOUNG MAN.

LENGTH.
WIDTH.


CHING CHING
SHAK SHAK



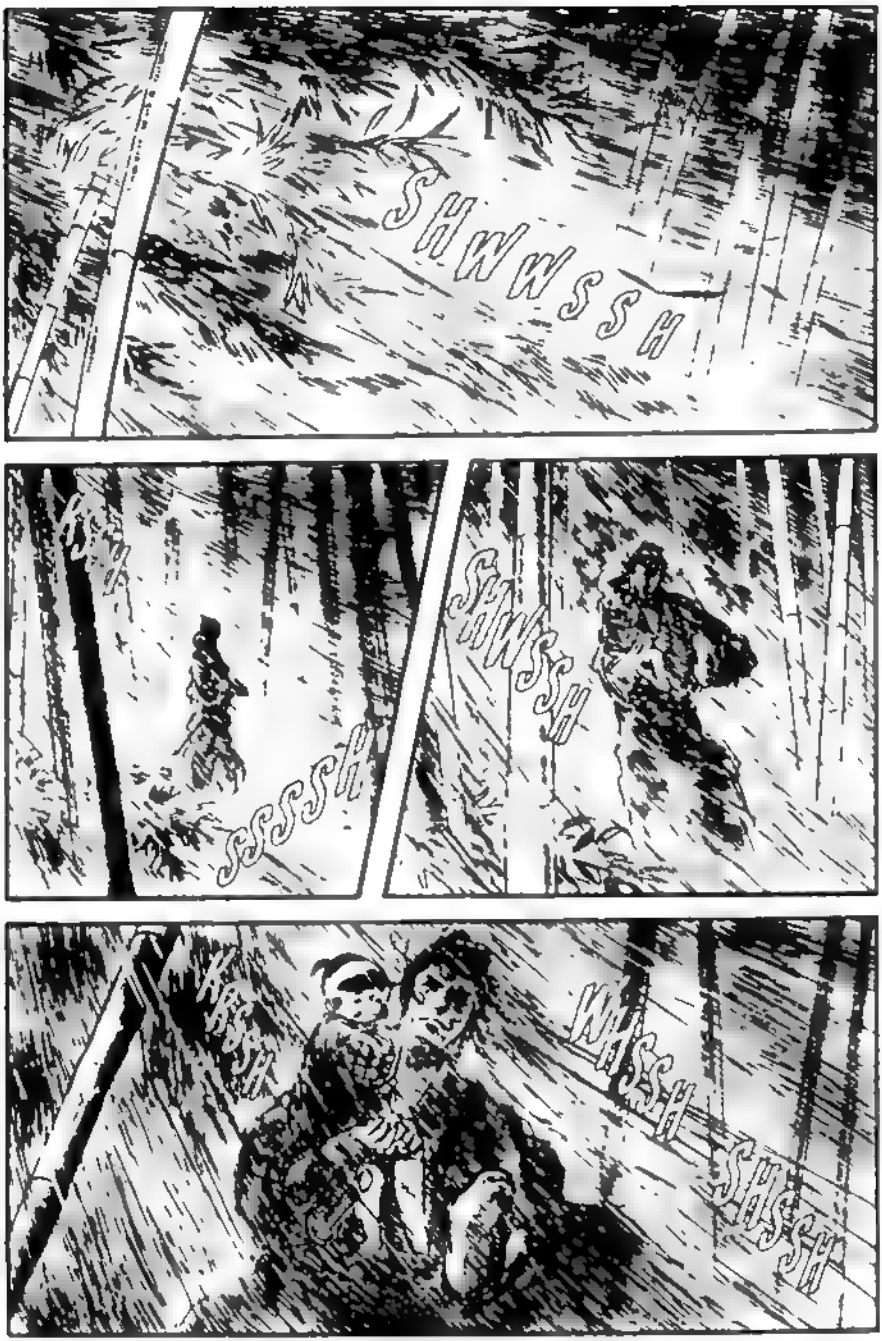
水太物

YOUR ROBES ARE READY
THANK YOU.

THIS HAS TO BE ALOESWOOD?
CHIDE ME FOR MY PRESUMPTION.
YET I ONCE HEARD THAT THE SAMURAI OF OLD WOULD SCENT THEIR CLOTHES WITH IT BEFORE GOING INTO BATTLE.
WE'LL NEVER FORGET

ŌGAMI ITTŌ, FORMER KŌGI KAISHAKUNIN MY SON, DAIGORO
YOU NEED NOT...
WHY NAME YOURSELF TO A TOWNSPERSON?
A BUSHI'S THANKS, FOR A BUSHI'S HEART
SHIT

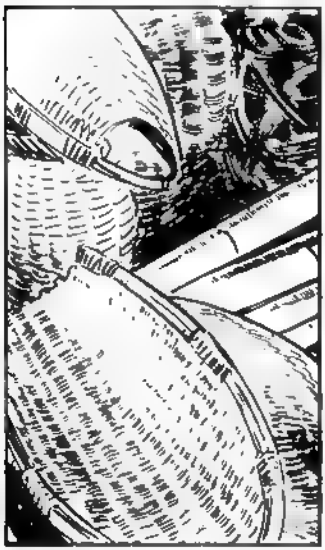
ŌGAMI ITTŌ-SAMA
AND HIS SON'S NAME, DAIGORO.

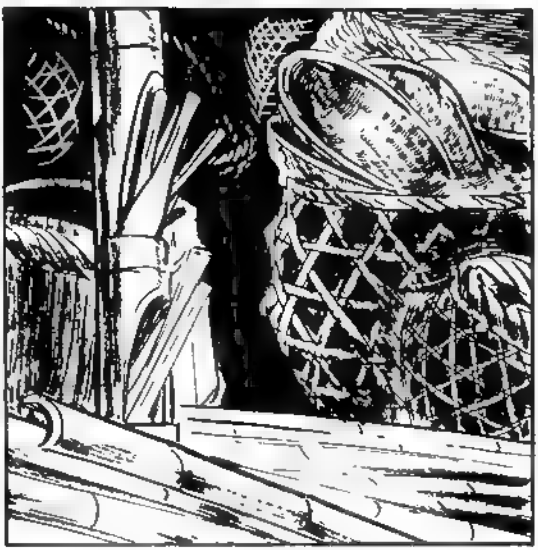

SHWSSH
SSSSH
SWSSH
WASSH
SHSSH

SSHH
SHS
FHWSSSH

BAM BAM BAM
BAM BAM BAM
KI'N THIS BE...?!
WHSSSSSH
SHSSH

STILL
STILL
ALIVE!





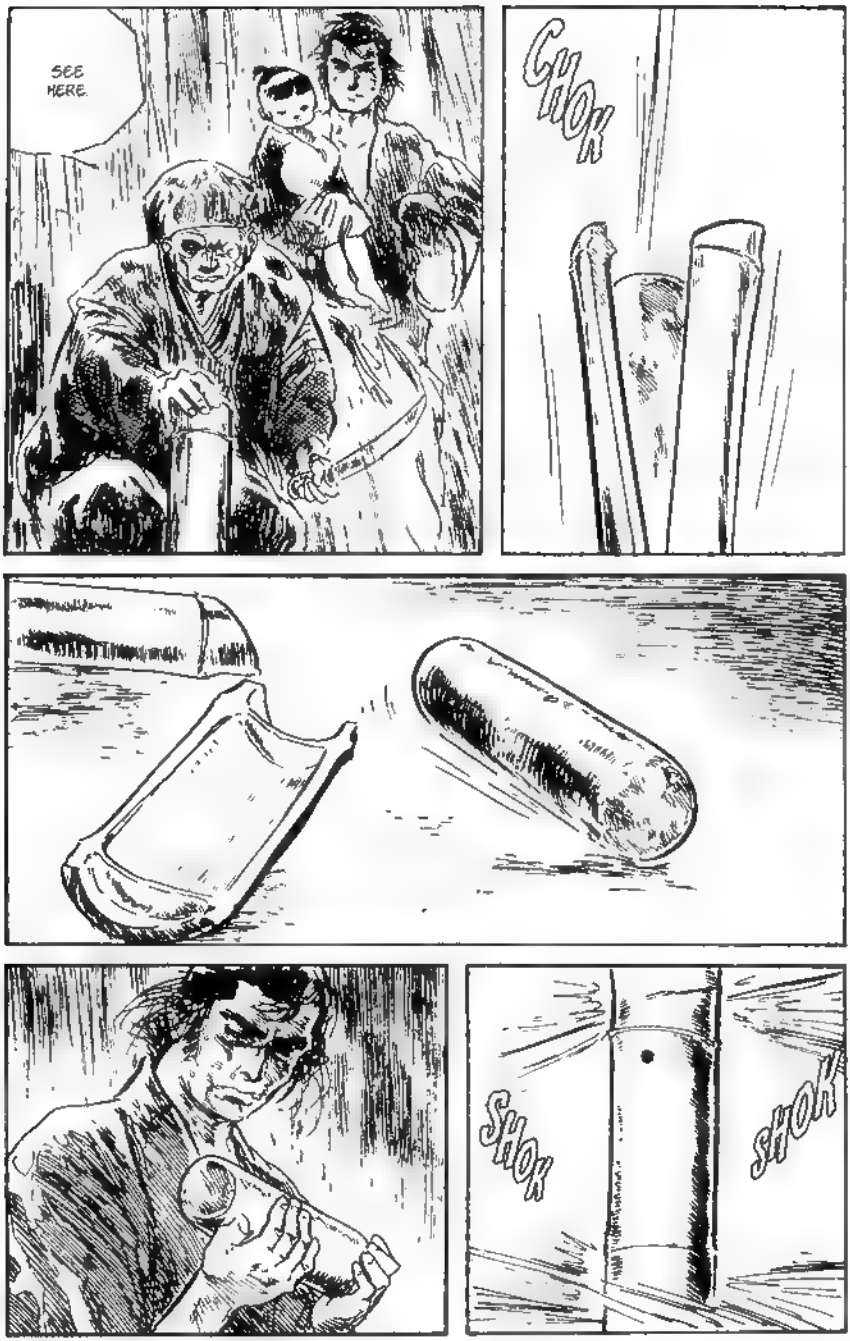
AND THE YOUNG MASTER..
SO BIG AND STRONG..
WE CAME TO BID FAREWELL.

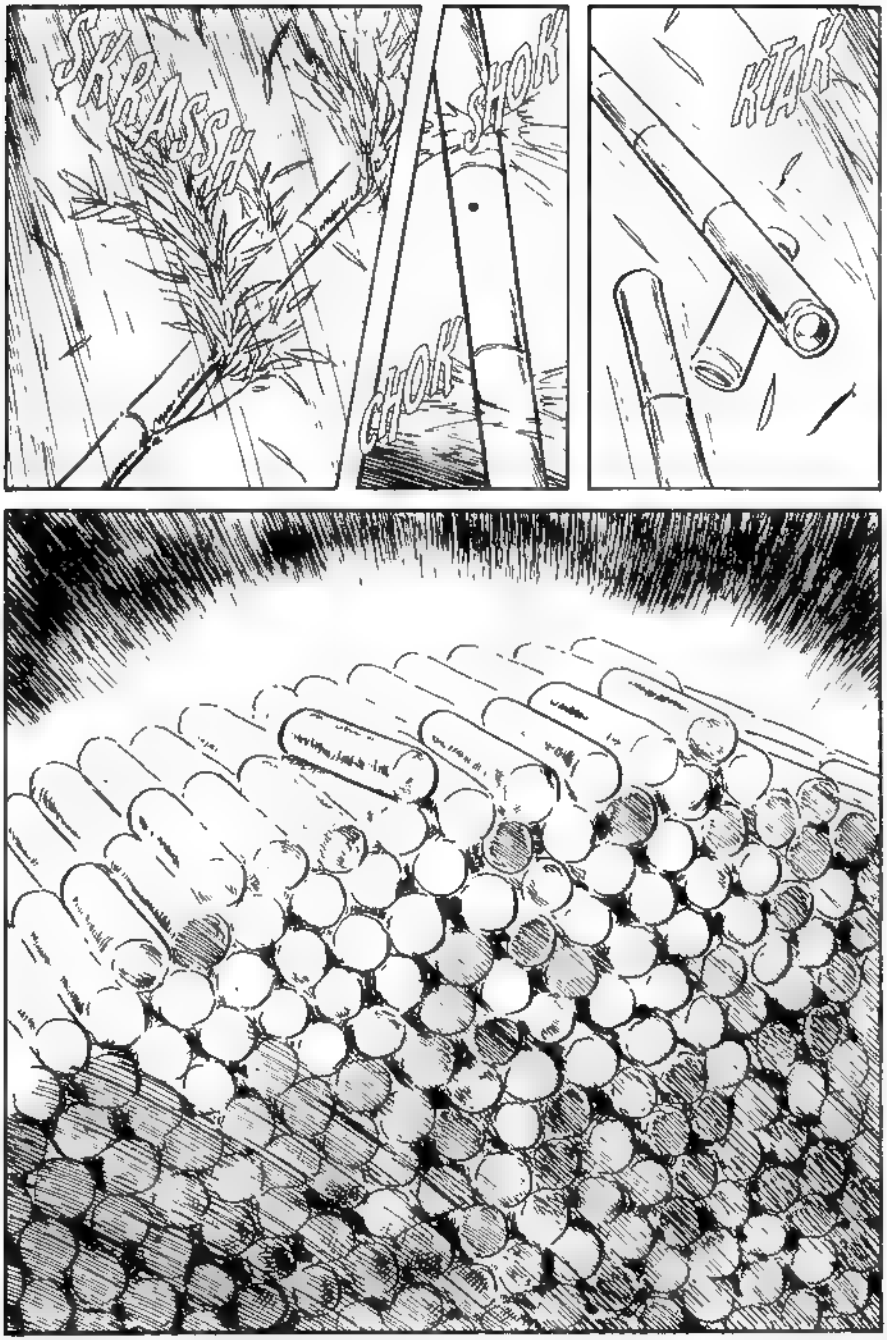
THEN.. ?
YES.
THE TIME
HAS COME
NNG...

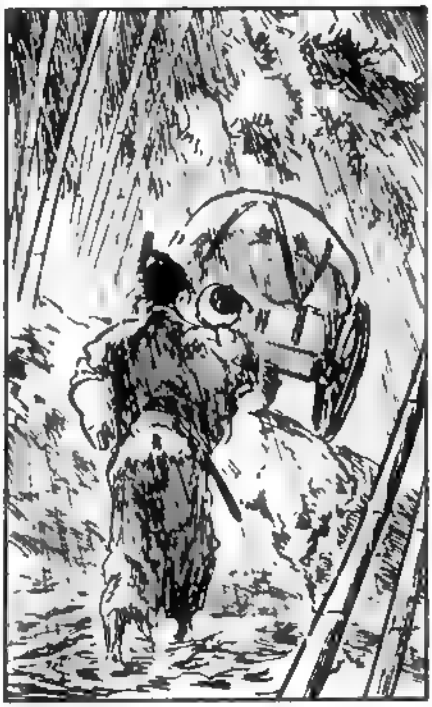
FOLLOW ME.
EVRY TIME A RUNNER CAME WITH GOLD, I THOUGHT
THEN THEY STOPPED COMIN'
AH, THEY'RE ALIVE..!
OLD CHIKLAMI COULDN'T SIT STILL FER WORRY

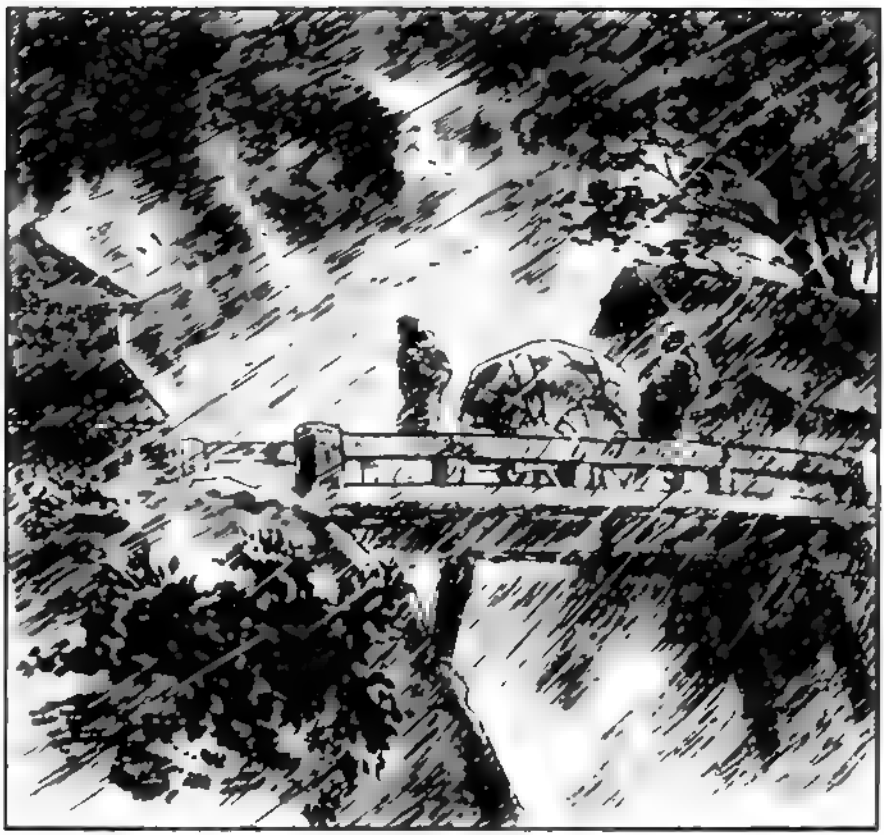
SHOK
SHOK

SKRRRSH
MELTED DOWN THEM GOLD PIECES, GOT 'EM PURE.
'N' I CAST 'EM IN BAMBOO, FORTY TWO THOUSAND RYO

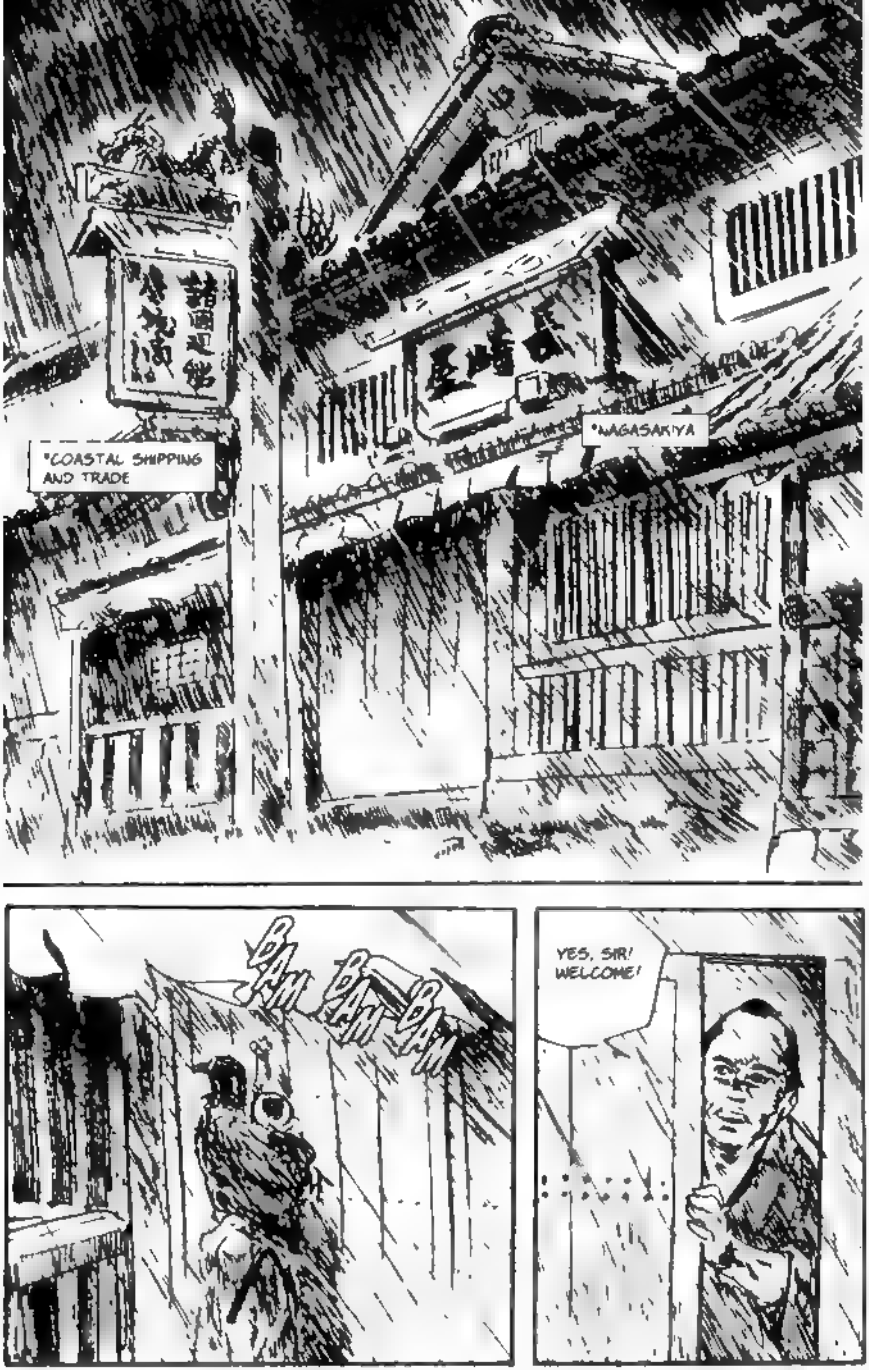

SEE HERE.
CHOK
SHOK
SHOK

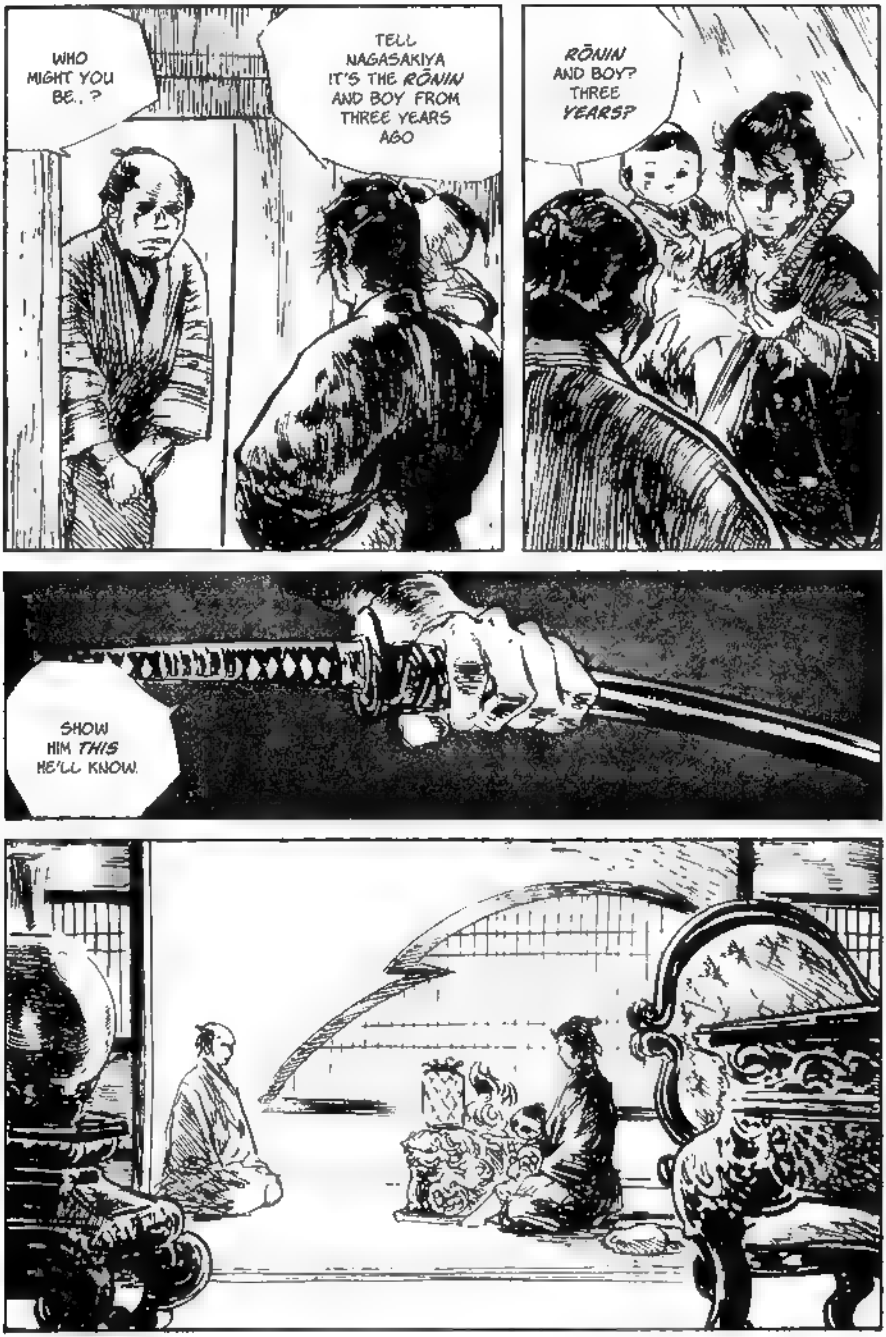

SKRASH
SHOK
CHOK
KTAK





SKSSHH
WHOOOSH


*COASTAL SHIPPING AND TRADE
*NAGASAKIYA
BAM BAM BAM
YES, SIR! WELCOME!


WHO MIGHT YOU BE..?
TELL NAGASAKIYA IT'S THE RŌNIN AND BOY FROM THREE YEARS AGO
RŌNIN AND BOY? THREE YEARS?
SHOW HIM THIS HE'LL KNOW.

WE'D AGREED ON NEXT APRIL.
YES. SIX MONTHS EARLY
I WON'T ARGUE. AND YET
THE APRIL SANKIN KŌTAI STILL SEEMS. .
IT'S OUT OF MY HANDS. CAN YOU DO IT?
OF COURSE EVERYTHING'S READY.
IT TOOK TWO YEARS, BUT I GOT ALL YOU ASKED FOR.

TŌTEKIRAI
I TRIED ONE AT SEA. VERY IMPRESSIVE.
THE FORTY THOUSAND IS OUT FRONT, CAST IN INGOTS.
PLEASE CHECK.
I CAN'T HAND THEM OVER IMMEDIATELY I HAD TO CONCEAL THEM...
CAN YOU DELIVER THEM? JŌMAN TEMPLE, FUKAGAWA?
UNDERSTOOD EARLY MORNING. . ON MY WORD

SO IT'S FINALLY TIME.
WHO IS HE, SIR?!
OF ALL THE MEN I'VE MET IN MY LIFE
THE ONE I WOULD MOST STRIVE TO BE LIKE, WERE I BORN A SAMURAI

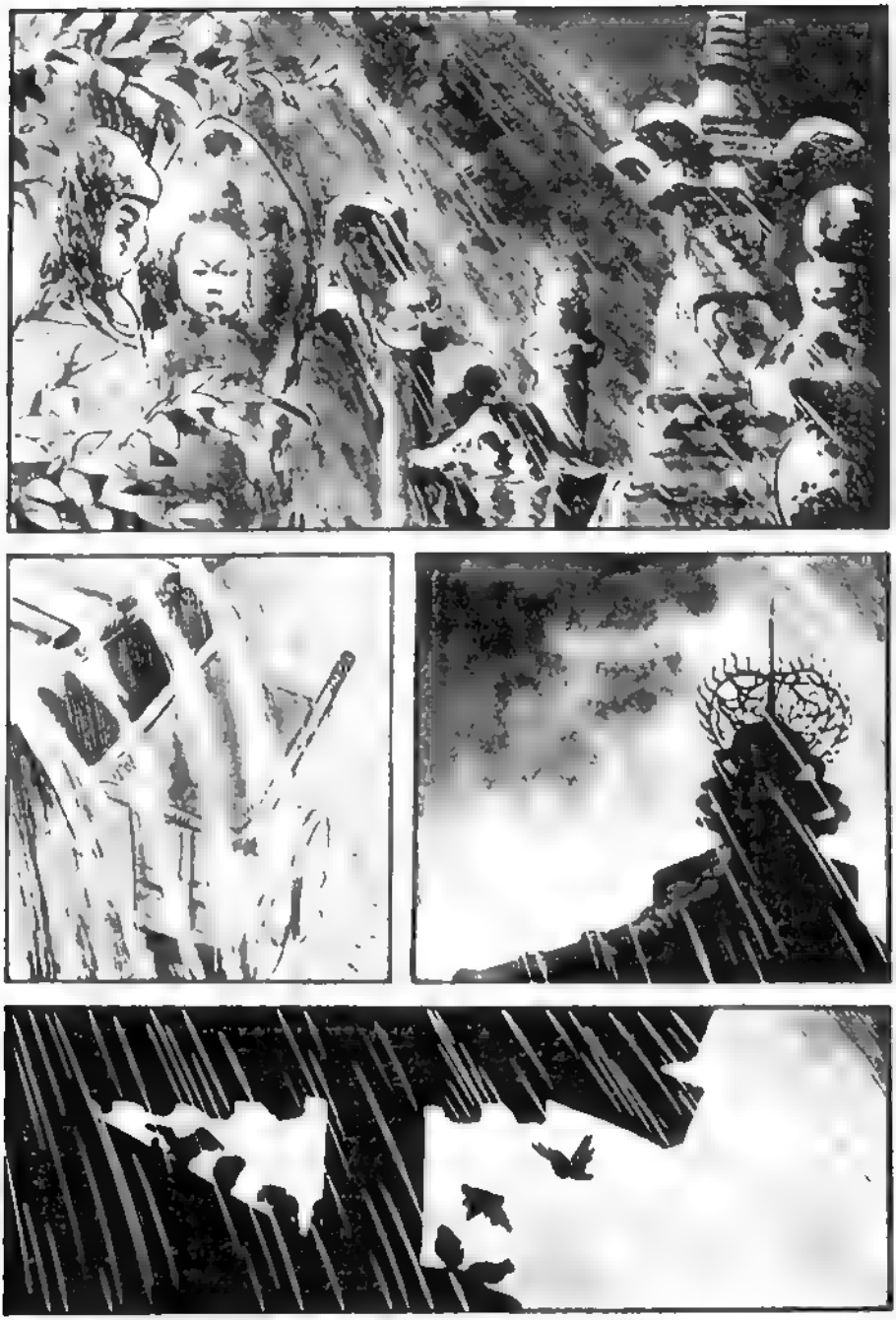
BAMBOO CRAFTSMAN, IMADO-NO-CHIKUAMI— FIFTY-SEVEN.
BUT IN YEARS PAST, SERVANT TO THE FAMILY OF ŌGAM, ITTŌ'S WIFE ASAMI, MURDERED BY THE YAGYŪ.

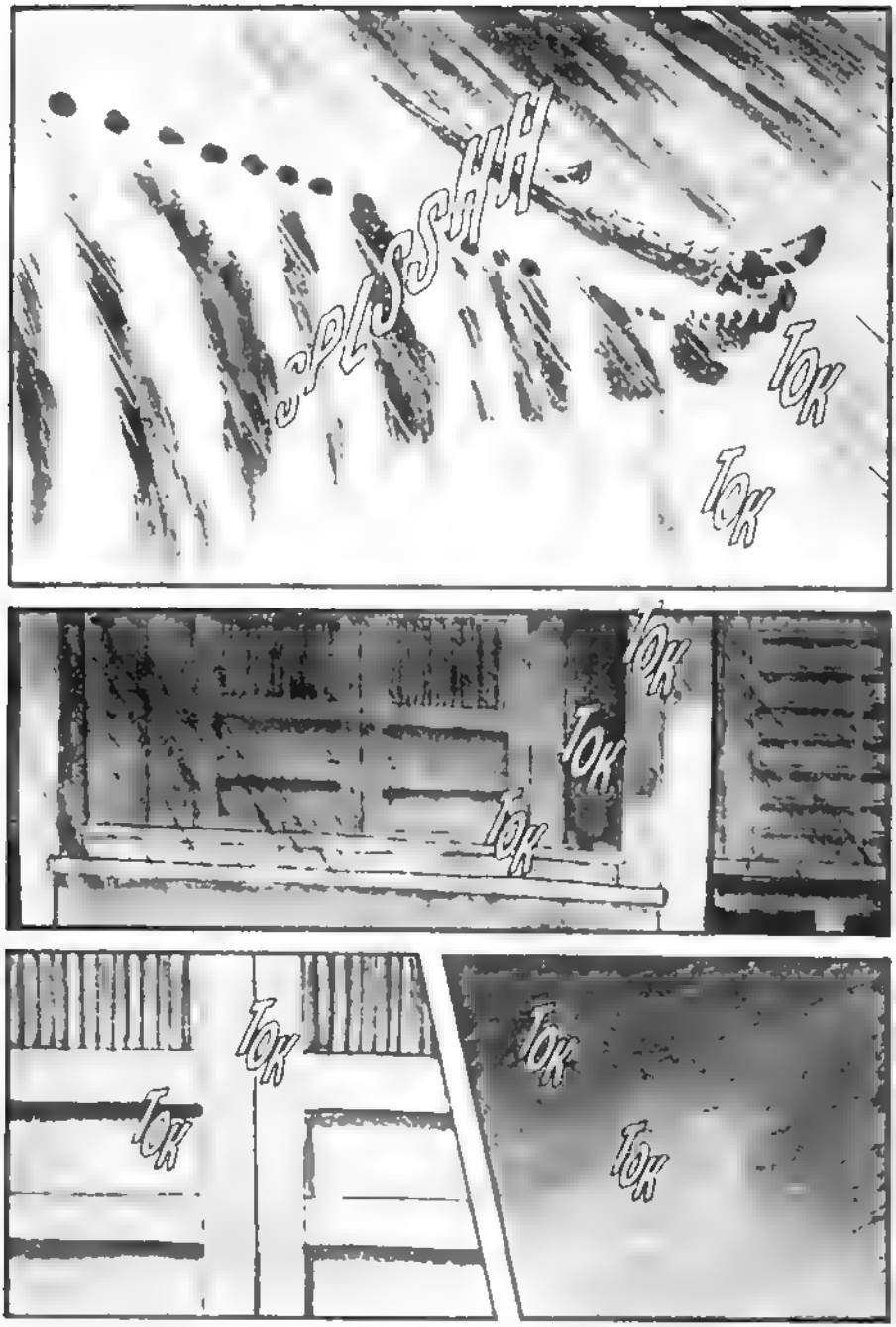
WE'LL MEET IN HELL, CHIKUAMI.

#MANGAPROJECT

the hundred and seventh

Kaii's Lullaby




SPLSSHH
TOK
TOK
TOK
TOK
TOK
TOK
TOK
TOK
TOK

GRIND AND MIX,
MIX AND GRIND
POISONER'S
CHILD
PASS AROUND
YOUR SAKE CUP
TO DRINK YOUR
POISON BY
POISON
SO BITTER
HARD TO
KEEP IT
DOWN
MOMMA'S MILK
SO SWEET
DRINK UNTIL
YOU DROWN
GRIND AND MIX
MIX AND GRIND
MIX GRIND
STIR!

GRIND AND MIX,
MIX AND GRIND
POISONER'S
CHILD
TOK
TOK
PASS ME
YOUR TEA CUP
TO DRINK YOUR
POISON BY
TOK
TOK
POISON
SO BITTER
HARD TO KEEP
IT DOWN
TOK
TOK
TOK
TOK
SO SWEET
DRINK UNTIL
YOU DROWN!

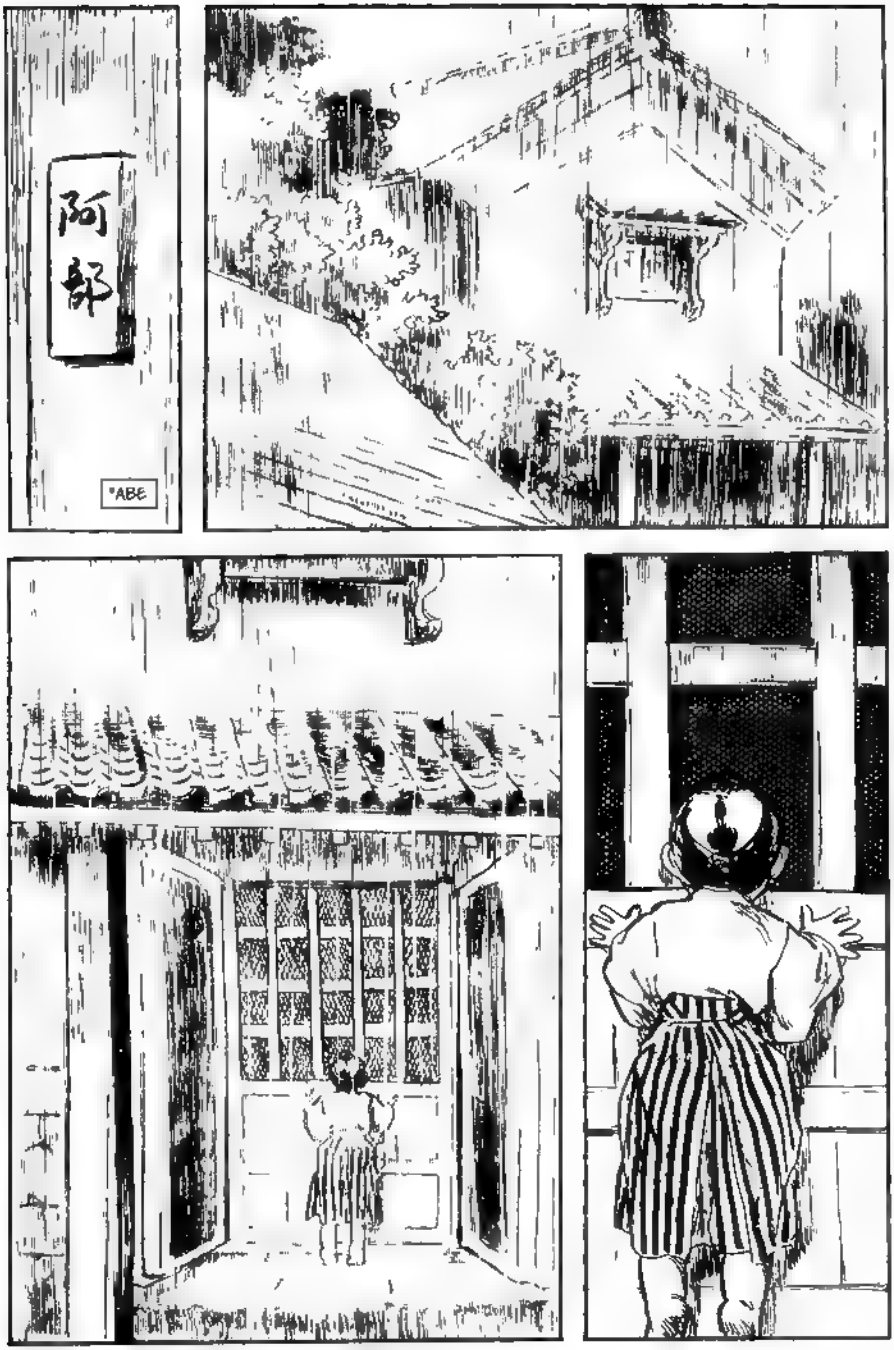
SPSH
SPSH

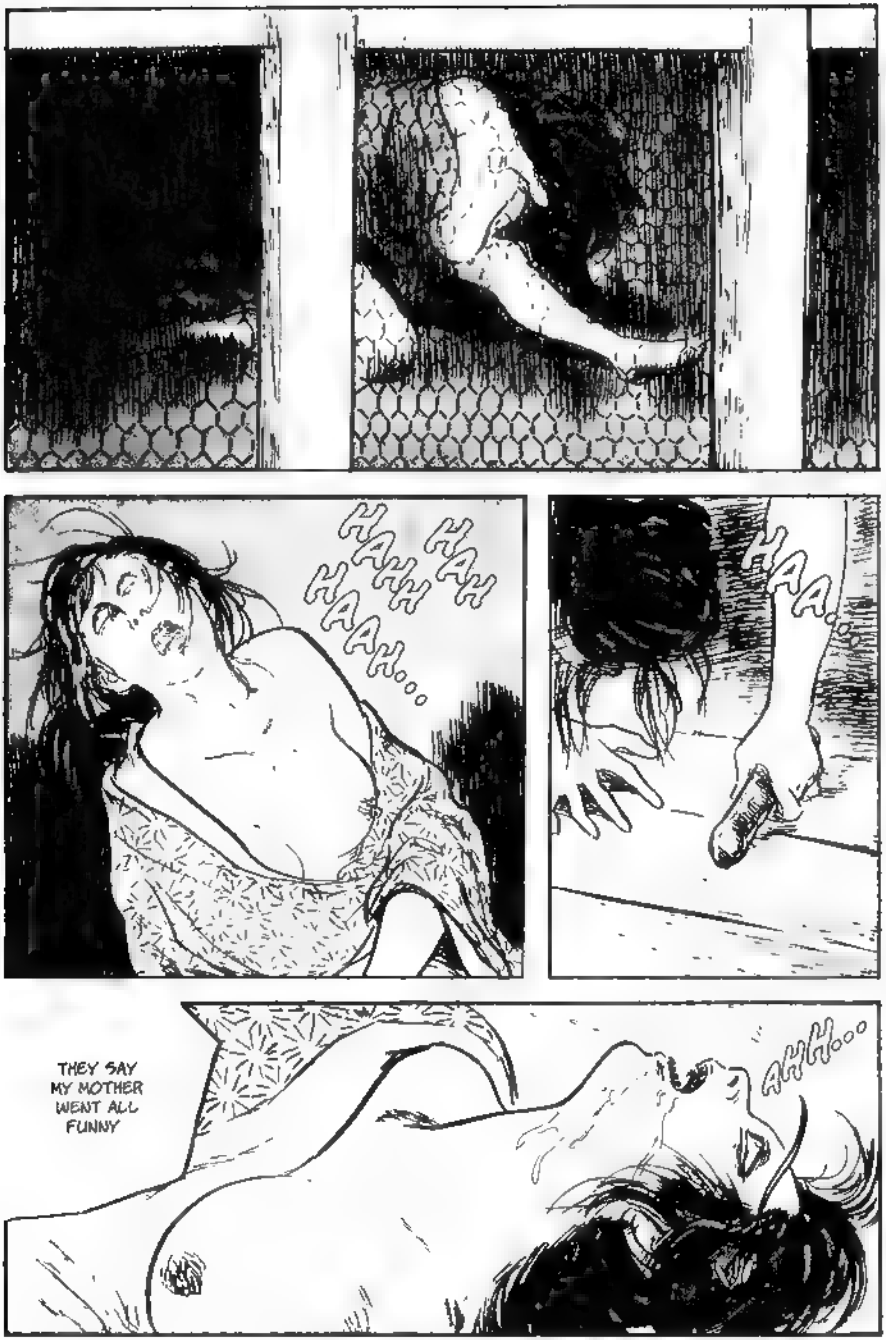
GRIND AND MIX, MIX AND GRIND
POISONERS CHILD
BRING ME MY MORTAR
TO MIX MY POISON IN!
GRIND AND MIX, MIX AND GRIND
MIX, GRIND, STIR!

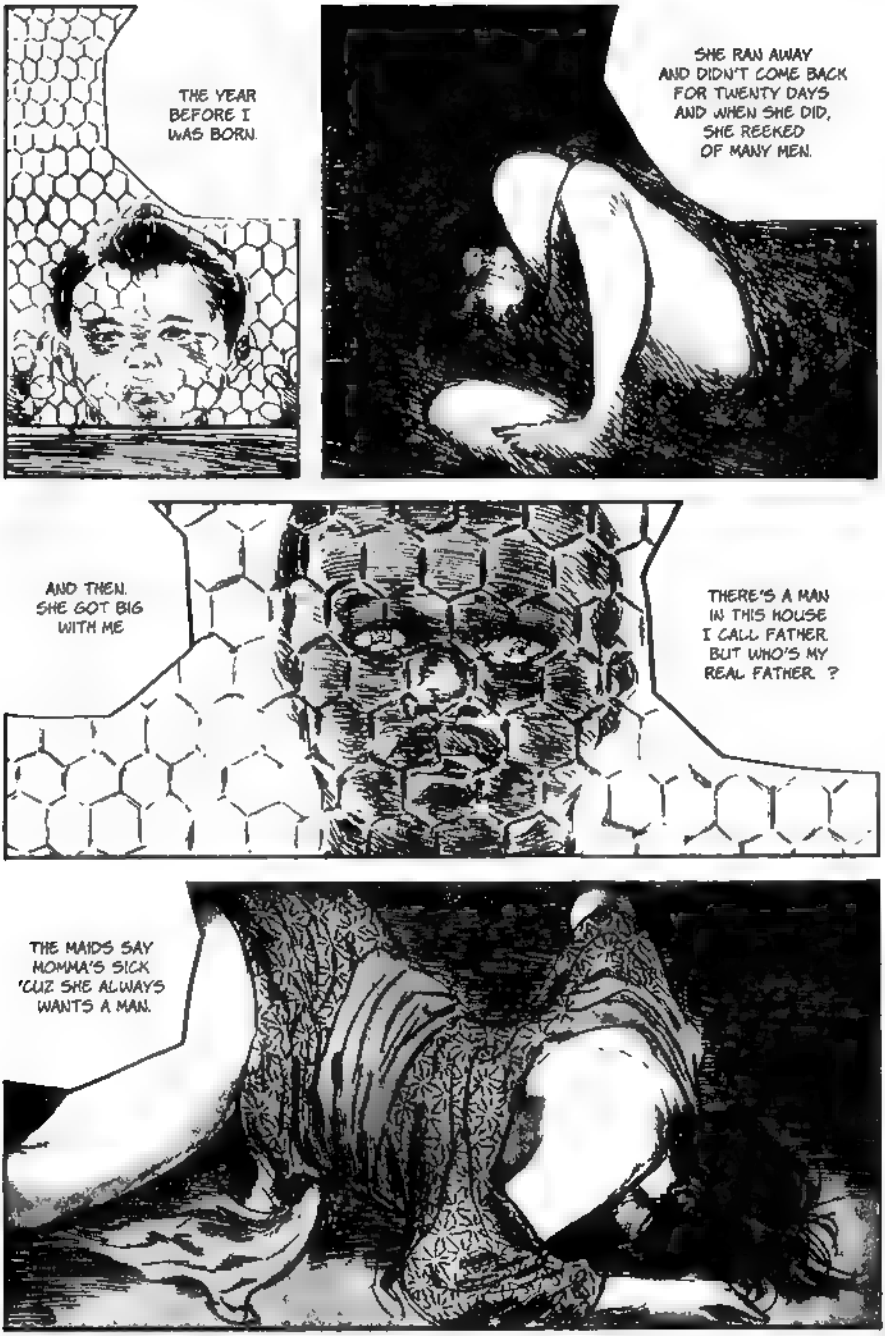
GRCGH
GRCGH
GRIND AND MIX, MIX AND GRIND
MIX, GRIND, STIR!
GRIND AND MIX, MIX AND GRIND
POISONER'S CHILD
DRINK DOWN YOUR POISON
THE BETTER TO SLEEP
WAKE
THE
AND BEYOND THE SKY
GRIND AND MIX, MIX AND GRIND
GRCGH GRCGH
MIX, GRIND, STIR!

WHSSSSHH
TAK TAK
SWOOSH
GRIND AND MIX MIX AND GRIND
POISONERS GRIND
AS I GROUND YOUR SAKE CUP
TO DRINK YOUR POISON UP!

POISON SO BITTER
HARD TO KEEP IT DOWN
MOMMA'S MILK SO SWEET
DRINK UNTIL YOU DROWN
KISS


阿部
ABE


HAHH HAH HAAH...
HAA...
THEY SAY MY MOTHER WENT ALL FUNNY
AHH...


THE YEAR BEFORE I WAS BORN.
SHE RAN AWAY AND DIDN'T COME BACK FOR TWENTY DAYS AND WHEN SHE DID, SHE REEKED OF MANY MEN.
AND THEN. SHE GOT BIG WITH ME
THERE'S A MAN IN THIS HOUSE I CALL FATHER. BUT WHO'S MY REAL FATHER ?
THE MAIDS SAY MOMMA'S SICK 'CUZ SHE ALWAYS WANTS A MAN.

AHH...!
DO PEOPLE GET SICK THAT WAY?
I HATE SEEING MY MOMMA LIKE THIS
HATE IT, HATE IT, *HATE* IT...
TANOSHI! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!

KRK
SPLCCH

I TOLD YOU NOT TO COME HERE!
KNEEL
FATHER... I HAVE TO CALL HIM FATHER.
HE'S A GREAT MAN. THE SHOGUN'S FOOD TASTER.. ABE GENMOTSU

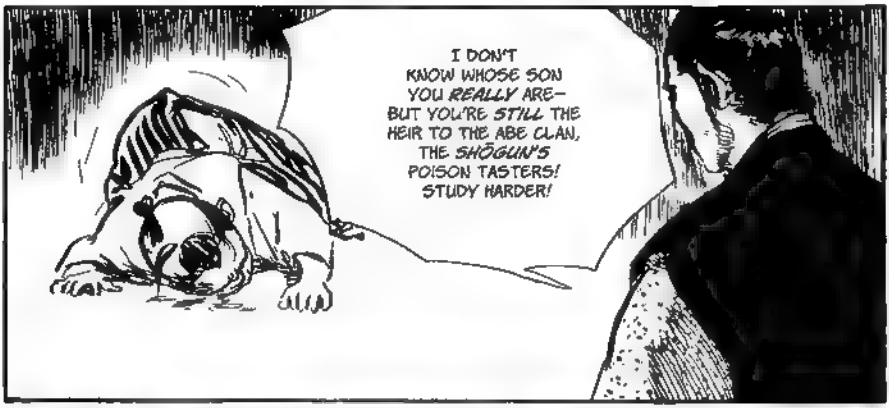
DINNER TIME. IT'S. .
SCARY. IT'S SO SCARY.

EAT!
NOW!
SLRP

CHMP CHMP
HURRGK!
GHHK
BRRGK!

HRK..
GRRK!
HHGK!
:koff:
HKK!
FOOL!
YOU CAN'T BE
KUCHIYAKU
THAT WAY!
POISON
CAN BE
ANYWHERE!
IT MIGHT
NOT BE IN
THE FOOD!
CHECK
THE HASHI!
THE BOWL!

KNOW IT WITH YOUR TONGUE! YOUR BODY!
HOW CAN YOU PROTECT OUR LORD IF YOU DON'T KNOW EVERY POISON AND WAY TO POISON?!

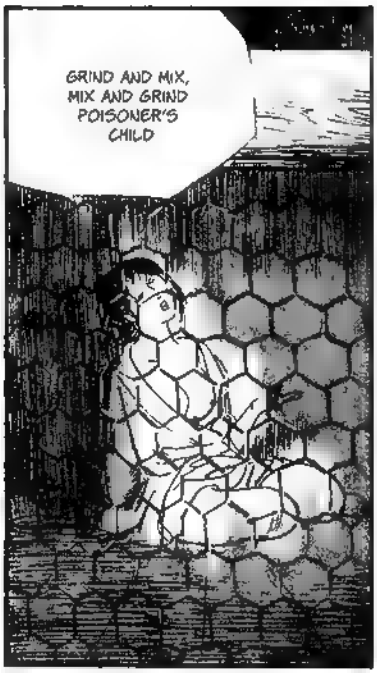

I DON'T KNOW WHOSE SON YOU REALLY ARE— BUT YOU'RE STILL THE HEIR TO THE ABE CLAN, THE SHŌGUN'S POISON TASTERS! STUDY HARDER!

THEY DISBAR A SAMURAI FAMILY THAT CAN'T PRODUCE A MALE HEIR.
AND SO... I WAS IT.

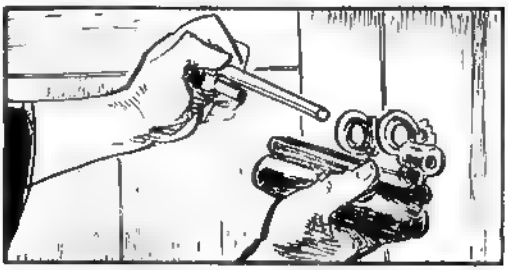
GACCH!
GACCH!
AND THAT *POISON* I'D SO FEARED? AS I GOT TO KNOW IT BETTER, I FOUND..

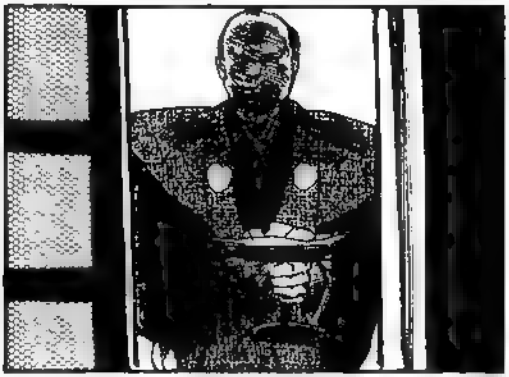
...THERE'S NOTHING BETTER IN THE WORLD!

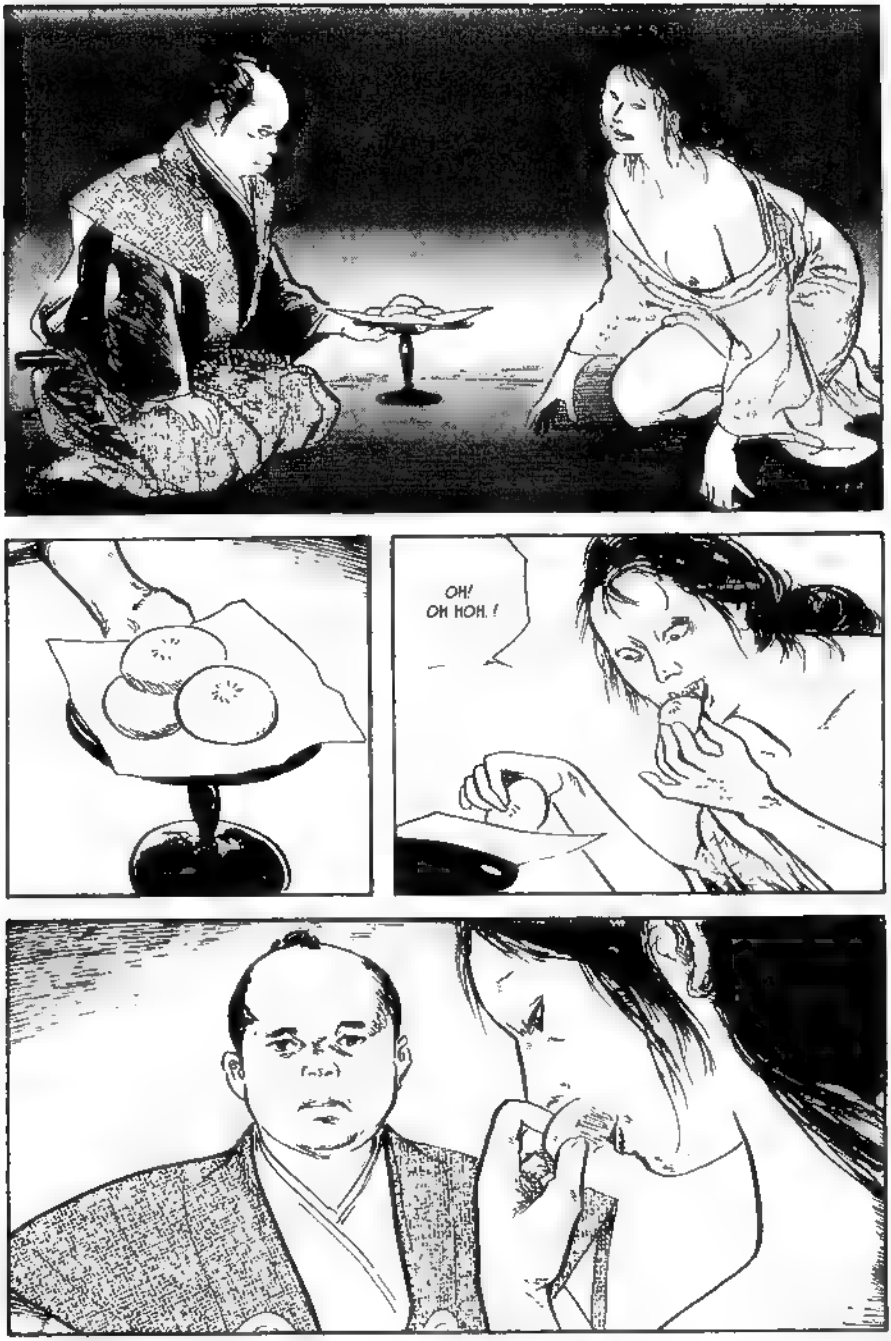
AND WHY'S THAT?

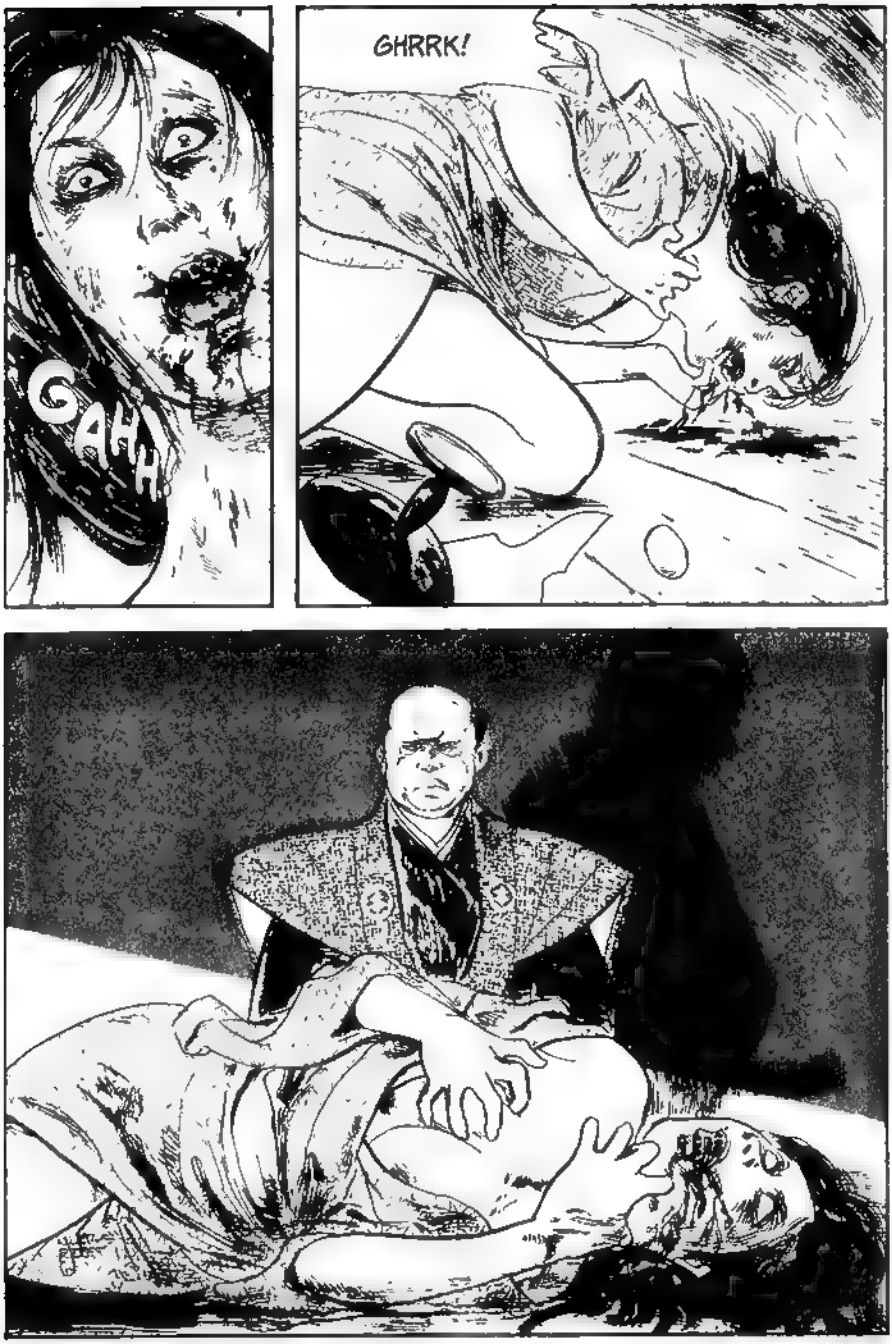

GRIND AND MIX,
MIX AND GRIND
POISONER'S
CHILD

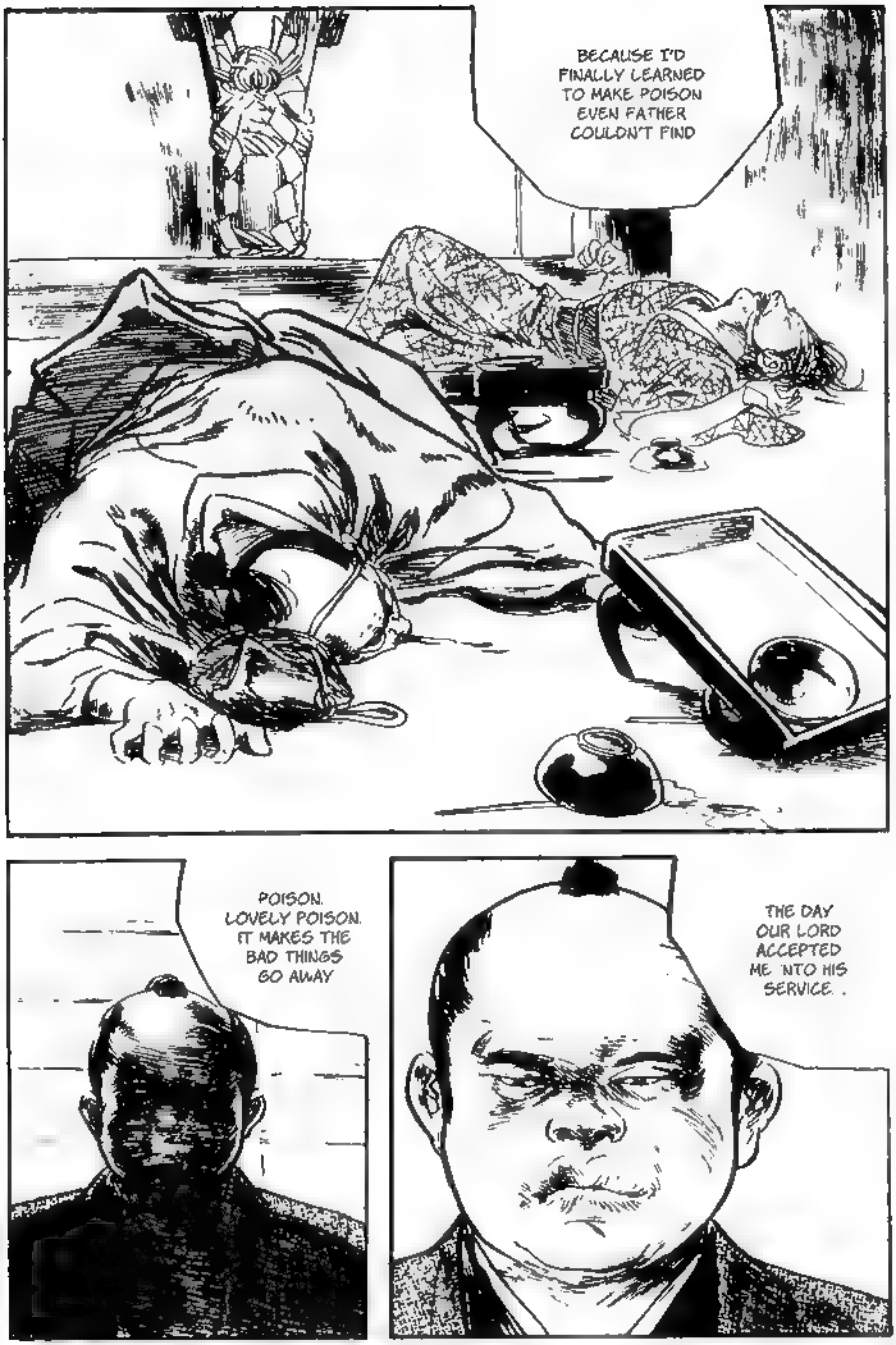
POISON SO BITTER
HARD TO KEEP IT DOWN
MOMMA'S MILK SO SWEET
DRINK UNTIL YOU DROWN!






OH!
OH HOH!


GAHH
GHRRK!


BECAUSE I'D FINALLY LEARNED TO MAKE POISON EVEN FATHER COULDN'T FIND
POISON. LOVELY POISON. IT MAKES THE BAD THINGS GO AWAY
THE DAY OUR LORD ACCEPTED ME INTO HIS SERVICE.

...I WAS...
FREE.
GRIND AND MIX,
MIX AND GRIND...
....?!

YOU'RE SO WET
PLEASE SIT BY THE FIRE.
THE HEAD PRIEST ..?

THERE'S BEEN A DEATH.
HE JUST LEFT FOR THE VILLAGE.
I'M A MENDICANT, NAME OF KAII. HE MENTIONED YOU.
PLEASE. GET THOSE OFF AND SIT
I'LL BRING DRY CLOTHES.
THANK YOU, BUT YOU NEEDN'T

KTAK
WH-
WHERE
ARE
YOU-
TO THE
WELL, FOR
MIZUGORI.

FHWSSSH
SCRAPE
KSHHH

DAIGORO.. CLEAR YOUR MIND
SPLSSH

SHAKK
SPLSH
KCHK KCHK
SPLSSH

LORDY! MUST BE FREEZING...!
SO.. COLD..!
BRRRR!
OOOH! LIKE ICE!
HOW. HOW CRUEL...!
I COULDN'T DO IT! SO BRUTAL! BRRR!

KBLOOSH
SPLSSH
SPLAKK

BRRP
BRP

WHAT ON...?
...
WHA—? FUNERAL ROBES...?
WE HAVE OUR REASONS.
MEANING... DON'T ASK?
WHEN YOU SEE THE HEAD PRIEST, TELL HIM WE ARE FOREVER IN HIS DEBT.

I WILL! REST ASSURED.
NOW, HOW ABOUT SOME POTATO SOUP? WHEREVER YOU GO, EVEN ACROSS THE SANZU, GO ON A FULL STOMACH, I SAY!
WE THANK YOU.

HERE. . I MASHED THEM ALL MYSELF!
GOBBLE IT UP!

QUICK! IT'LL GET COLD.

OOPS.. A LITTLE SPILL I–
TAK
OUR HABUTAE HAVE BEEN INFUSED... WITH ALOESWOOD.

AH?!
AND POISON MAKES ALOESWOOD TURN BLACK.
AH. AAH!
GHK
YEE!
MONK! WILL YOU CHANT THE SUTRAS FOR TWO WHO GO TO DIE?

THE SUTRAS! BEGIN!
NNNGN ....
YOU SIT
THE BUDDHA! BUDDHA'S SERVANT SHOULD PAY IF HE FORGETS HIS SUTRAS.
BEGIN.

NOW!!
G..G... GRIND AND.. MIX ....
MIX AND GRIND... PO...POISONER'S CHILD...
PA . PASS AROUND.. YOUR SAKE CUP...
PO. POISON SO BITTER.. HARD TO KEEP IT DOWN... MOMMA'S MILK SO SWEET. .
GRIND AND MIX, MIX AND GRIND.. MIX, GRIND... STIR .

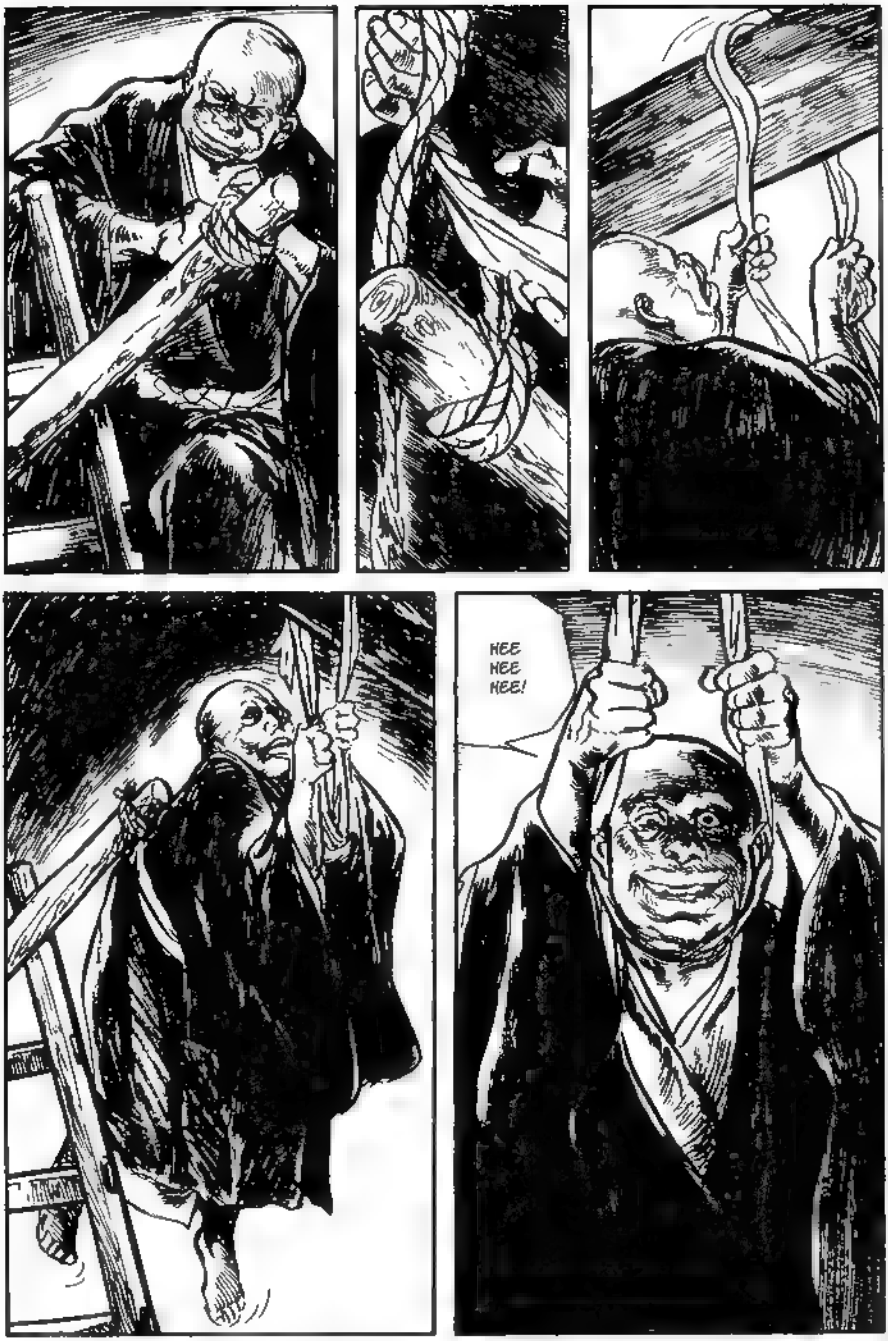
AAH...!
YOUR NAME!
A. ABE. TA. TANOSHI.
GENMOTSU-DONO'S SON?
TH.. THAT'S RIGHT
AND GENMOTSU-DONO?!
HE PASSED AWAY I. I'M KUCHIYAKU NOW .
THE YAGYŪ ORDERED YOU?
Y-YES..

AND THE YAGYŪ?
RIGHT. BEHIND ME THE WHOLE CLAN.
I THOUGHT AS MUCH.
YEE!
TELL YAGYŪ RETSUDŌ.
FATHER AND SON, WE WAIT BY THE HACHŌ RIVER.

AH. AH?!
M-MY HEAD
STILL
ATTACHED?
BUT
WHY DIDN'T
HE KILL ME?
WHY?!
AHH! THE
YAGYU!!
NOW
THAT MY
PLANS ARE
RUINED..
WHAT
DO I
DO?!

EVEN. . .
EVEN IF I RUN, THEY'LL CATCH ME!
AND YET I CAN'T EVEN TOUCH LONE WOLF AND CUB!
IT'S A MIRACLE I'VE STILL GOT MY HEAD
HMM?!
THAT'S IT! MY HEAD! IF I SHOW RETSUDŌ IT'S NOT ATTACHED..
HEE HEE! OF COURSE!
I'M A GENIUS! HAH! A GENIUS!

LET HIM THINK I'M DEAD! NO MORE RUNNING! NO MORE CHASING!
AND THEN! BORN AGAIN!
HEE HEE HEE!
KANG
KANG


HEE
HEE
HEE!

LONE WOLF AND CUB VOLUME TWENTY-ONE: THE END
TO BE CONTINUED

GLOSSARY

afuyō
A type of opiate drug

buke
Samurai families

bushi
A samurai. A member of the warrior class.

bushidō
The way of the warrior. Also known as *shidō*.

Edo
Edo was a castle town, that rose up around the moats and ramparts of Edo castle, the stronghold of the Tokugawa clan. The central core of the city, administered by the *machi-bugyō* city commissioner, who reported directly to the shōgun's senior councilors, and was demarcated on official maps by a black line, the *kuroboki*, and was called the *go-funai*

habutae
Unbleached, white silk

hashi
Chopsticks

honorifics
Japan is a class and status society, and proper forms of address are critical. Common markers of respect are the prefixes *o* and *go*, and a wide range of suffixes. Some of the suffixes you will encounter in *Lone Wolf and Cub*
chan – for children, young women, and close friends
dono – archaic; used for higher-ranked or highly respected figures
san – the most common, used among equals or near-equals
sama – used for superiors
sensei – used for teachers, masters, respected entertainers, and politicians

ibuki bōfū
Carrot-like root plant with medicinal properties

ki
Energy. The fundamental mind/body energy of Eastern medicine

kōgi kaishakunin
The shōgun's own second, who performed executions ordered by the shōgun

kuchiyaku
Kuchiyaku were the tasters for the shogun family. They were called kuchiyaku, or "official mouths," because they checked for poison with their own tongues

machi-bugyō
The Edo city commissioner, combining the post of mayor and chief of police. A post held in monthly rotation by two senior Tokugawa vassals, in charge of administration, maintaining the peace, and enforcing the law in Edo. Their rule extended only to commoners; samurai in Edo were controlled by their own *daimyō* and his officers. The *machi-bugyō* had an administrative staff and a small force of armed policemen at his disposal.

metsuke
Inspector. A post combining the functions of chief of police and chief intelligence officer.

mizugori
To purify yourself with cold water before asking a favor of Buddha or the gods

mochi
A sticky rice cake, a traditional food to celebrate the new year, made by pounding sweet rice with mallets.

rōnin
A masterless samurai. Literally, "one adrift on the waves." Members of the samurai caste who have lost their masters through the dissolution of *han*, expulsion for misbehavior, or other reasons. Prohibited from working as farmers or merchants under the strict Confucian caste system imposed by the Tokugawa shōgunate, many impoverished *rōnin* became "hired guns" for whom the code of the samurai was nothing but empty words.

sakayaki
The topknot favored in the Edo period. Still seen on sumo wrestlers today.

sankin kōtai
The Tokugawa required that all *daimyō* spend every other year in Edo, with family members remaining behind when they returned to their *han*. This practice increased Edo's control over the *daimyō*, both political and fiscal, since the cost of maintaining two separate households and traveling to and from the capital placed a huge strain on *han* finances.

sanzu
Three Ways. The river that divides the land of the living from *meido*, the land of the dead.

sumaki
A form of lynching. The victim is beaten, rolled up in a mat, and thrown into a river

tōtekirai
Hand-thrown explosives. A primitive hand grenade.

yakuza
Japan's criminal syndicates. In the Edo period, *yakuza* were a common part of the landscape, running houses of gambling and prostitution. As long as they did not overstep their bounds, they were tolerated by the authorities, a tradition little changed in modern Japan.

子連れ狼

KAZUO KOIKE

Though widely respected as a powerful writer of graphic fiction, Kazuo Koike has spent a lifetime reaching beyond the bounds of the comics medium. Aside from co-creating and writing the successful *Lone Wolf and Cub* and *Crying Freeman* manga, Koike has hosted television programs; founded a golf magazine, produced movies, written popular fiction, poetry, and screenplays; and mentored some of Japan's best manga talent.

Lone Wolf and Cub was first serialized in Japan in 1970 (under the title *Kozure Okami)* in *Manga Action* magazine and continued its hugely popular run for many years, being collected as the stories were published, and reprinted worldwide. Koike collected numerous awards for his work on the series throughout the next decade. Starting in 1972, Koike adapted the popular manga into a series of six films, the *Baby Cart Assassin* saga, garnering widespread commercial success and critical acclaim for his screenwriting

This wasn't Koike's only foray into film and video. In 1996, *Crying Freeman*, the manga Koike created with artist Ryoichi Ikegami, was produced in Hollywood and released to commercial success in Europe and is currently awaiting release in America

And to give something back to the medium that gave him so much, Koike started the *Gekiga Sonjuku*, a college course aimed at helping talented writers and artists — such as *Ranma 1/2* creator Rumiko Takahashi — break into the comics field.

The driving focus of Koike's narrative is character development, and his commitment to character is clear: "Comics are carried by characters. If a character is well created, the comic becomes a hit." Kazuo Koike's continued success in comics and literature has proven this philosophy true.

GOSEKI KOJIMA

Goseki Kojima was born on November 3, 1928, the very same day as the godfather of Japanese comics, Osamu Tezuka. While just out of junior high school, the self-taught Kojima began painting advertising posters for movie theaters to pay his bills.

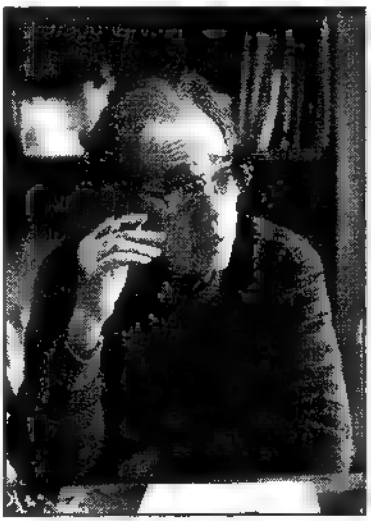
In 1950, Kojima moved to Tokyo, where the postwar devastation had given rise to special manga forms for audiences too poor to buy the new manga magazines. Kojima created art for *kami-shibai*, or "paper-play" narrators, who would use manga story sheets to present narrated street plays. Kojima moved on to creating works for the *kashi-bon* market, bookstores that rented out books, magazines, and manga to mostly low-income readers. He soon became highly popular among *kashi-bon* readers.

In 1967, Kojima broke into the magazine market with his series *Dojinki*. As the manga magazine market grew and diversified, he turned out a steady stream of popular series.

In 1970, in collaboration with Kazuo Koike, Kojima began the work that would seal his reputation, *Kozure Okami* (*Lone Wolf and Cub*). Before long the story had become a gigantic hit, eventually spinning off a television series, six motion pictures, and even theme song records. Koike and Kojima were soon dubbed the "golden duo" and produced success after success on their way to the pinnacle of the manga world.

When *Manga Japan* magazine was launched in 1994, Kojima was asked to serve as consultant, and he helped train the next generation of manga artists.

In his final years, Kojima turned to creating original graphic novels based on the movies of his favorite director, Akira Kurosawa. Kojima passed away on January 5, 2000 at the age of 71.



THE RONIN REPORT

By David S. Hofhine

An Authentic Example of a Dotanuki School Sword: part two

The tang of this blade is as thick as the blade itself and runs most of the length of the handle to fortify the handle against breakage. This tang is signed on both sides in Japanese kanji, with one side signed Higo Dotanuki Munehiro (fig. 5), indicating that the blade was forged by a smith named Munehiro from the Dotanuki school working in Higo province. The other side is signed *Tenpo ju nen san gatsu nichi* (fig. 6), which is the date that the blade was forged, being "a day in the third month of the 10th year of *Tenpo*," or March 1839. This particular Dotanuki was forged about 180 years after the events depicted in *Lone Wolf and Cub*.

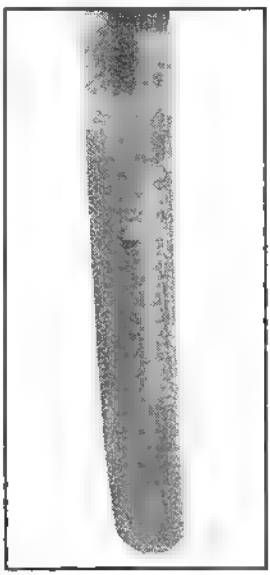


Fig 5

There is always some question as to whether a signature is false (*gimei*) or true (*shoshin mei*), since faking big-name signatures is an artform almost as old as blade forging itself. A good friend of mine living in Japan is a great authority on Japanese swords and also happens to own

another blade made by this exact same smith, which has been authenticated by top experts in Japan. This judgment is made by comparing not only the signatures of the two blades, but also the shape, style, *ji-hada*, *hamon*, and all other features of the blade collectively.

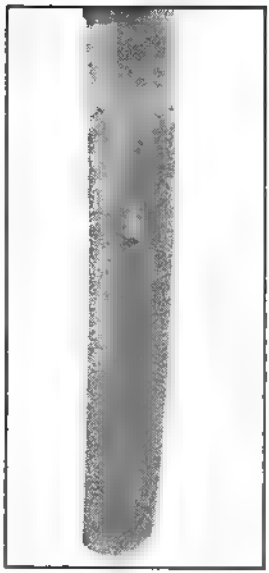


Fig. 6

A final and sweet bit of history associated with this blade is its original Higo province mountings. This is particularly intriguing because the Dotanuki were based in Higo, and this appears to be the original mounting first crafted for the sword when it was newly forged in 1839. These mountings are largely composed of wood and lacquer and do not normally stand the test of time as well as a steel blade, so having the sword's original mounting is a great boon.

The handle, or *tsuka* (fig. 7), is made of *honoki* wood carefully carved to fit the tang exactly. It is then covered with *samé*, which is the very rough and bony skin of a flat fish, something like a ray, found in the Sea of Japan. The *samé* has been coated in a dark red lacquer to complement the scabbard, and the ends are fitted with metal caps called *fuchi* and *kashira*. The end caps for this handle are made of fine copper covered in *shakudo*, which is a glossy black alloy mixture of copper and gold, and are further engraved with an *oxalis* vine pattern inlaid with silver and gold.

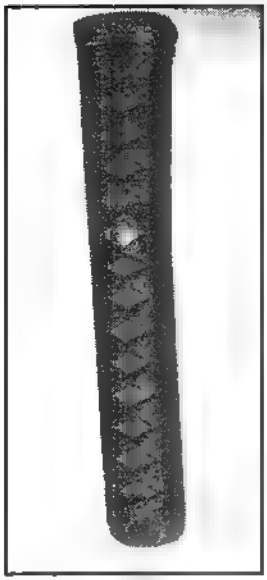


Fig. 7

Typical of Higo mounts, the handle is wrapped with a type of thin, fine leather and is still in very good shape for its age. I have it on good authority that this wrapping is most likely monkey skin! Apparently monkey was a popular handle wrapping material at one time, while today a flat cord of silk is most commonly used.

Under the wrapping are two metal ornaments called *menuki*. These are a traditional part of a Japanese sword handle and help to improve the grip somewhat. The *menuki* are in the pattern of a stylized frog and fish in *shakudo* and gold. Often there is some sort of story or significance to the images and patterns on sword fittings, but what the frog and fish might signify here is beyond my knowledge.

Between the handle and the blade is the guard, or *tsuba* (fig. 8). This divides the blade from the handle, protecting the hands when the blade is in use, and is often covered with elaborate engravings and inlays depicting an infinite variety of themes and motifs. This *tsuba* is in the shape of a particular family crest known as *hiki*, a bar or bars in a circle, most likely indicating the family affiliation of the original owner. This crest was used by the Nitta, Ishiki, Iwamatsu, Sakakibara, Yamane, and Ura families.

This *tsuba* is further engraved with an *oxalis* vine pattern, which appears to have originally been inlaid with gold and matches the pattern of the *fuchi* and *kashira* on the handle. There is also a small dovetailed area at the top of the *tsuba* where a metal inlay seems to have fallen out.

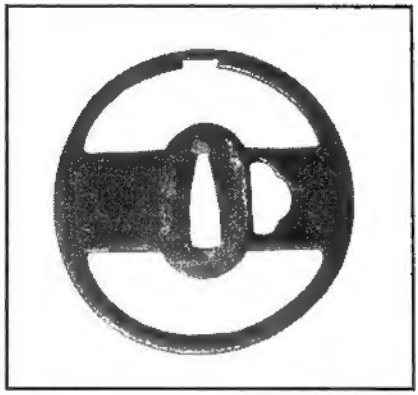


Fig. 8

The scabbard, or *saya* (fig. 9), is carved wood covered in lacquer with carved black horn parts. The lacquer is in a black-and-red swirl pattern, and was done by building up a very thick coating of black lacquer with rippled brush strokes and then covering this with red lacquer. The final surface is then polished down part way through the red lacquer revealing the black in streaks. The final effect is dramatic and very attractive.

This sword is an authentic Dotanuki, but it is a bit different than the one used by Itto Ogami. Its handle and tang are a bit shorter than usual for its blade length, though the handle may have been made shorter at the request of the owner. By this late date, the owner would have likely been more bureaucrat than *bushi* and may not have wanted to bother with carrying around a longer, more cumbersome weapon. This could also have been due to a strong western influence that was creeping into Japan by the mid-nineteenth century. Western swords of the period were generally meant to be wielded in a single

hand as opposed to the traditional two-handed *katana* and therefore had much shorter handles.

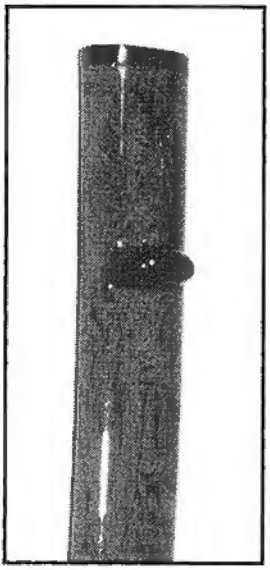


Fig. 9

There is something a little peculiar about the overall appearance of this blade, however. While it is definitely a Dotanuki blade, it has more in common with the old Hizen school blades than it does with the old Dotanuki school work. The difference between the Hizen and neighboring Higo Dotanuki blades was a major theme of my last article (see *LWC* vol. 12). The slender shape and exceptionally fine *ji-hada* of this blade are both more characteristic of the refined and elegant Hizen blades, than of the utilitarian choppers the Dotanuki were known to produce during that time period. It seems that 240 years of relative peace finally caught up with the Dotanuki, and they were eventually made to cater more to the aesthetics of the samurai nobleman than the martial penchant of the samurai warriors of old.

At any rate and by any measure, this is a very fine blade with an exceptional mounting, and it has been my great pleasure to share this unique treasure with my fellow *Lone Wolf and Cub* enthusiasts. If you would like more information on Japanese swords or sword polishing in general, please feel free to visit my website at *www.swordpolish.com*.

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